

Jonathan Swift

1667–1745

Swift, a cousin of Dryden, was born in Dublin, and educated beside Congreve at Kilkenny School and Trinity College, Dublin. A period as secretary to the statesman-author Sir William Temple having failed to win him advancement, he was ordained in Ireland (1694). Back in Temple's household at Moor Park, he wrote *The Battle of the Books* (1697), part of the debate on the superiority of ancient or modern learning, and *A Tale of a Tub* (1696; both works published 1704), a combination of religious allegory and intellectual virtuosity. Here too he first met 'Stella', Esther Johnson, recipient of many of his writings, with whom his relationship remains unclear. After Temple's death, he returned to Ireland, receiving church offices, but visiting London often, and writing pamphlets of varying irony (*An Argument against Abolishing Christianity*, 1708). The Whigs' favouring dissenters led to his support of the Tories, on whose side he wrote political works (*The Conduct of the Allies*, 1711; *The Public Spirit of the Whigs*, 1714). He was a leading member of the Scriblerus Club with Pope (see p. 205).

After the death of Queen Anne and the fall of the Tory government, his hostility to the long Whig dominance left him for most of his life in Dublin, where he had become Dean of St Patrick's Cathedral. Despite his position as officer of the established (Anglican) church in a largely Catholic country, Swift devoted much of his income to practical charity, and his satiric power to attacking England's colonial exploitation of Ireland (*The Drapier's Letters*, 1724; *A Modest Proposal*, 1729). He normally issued his works anonymously or pseudonymously, often exploiting ironically the 'persona' of a supposed author whose ideas differ significantly from Swift's: *Travels into Several Remote Nations of the World* (1726) by 'Lemuel Gulliver' develops his political and moral satire.

In his Irish period, despite increasing illness which led many to think him insane, Swift had great public influence. Nineteenth-century critics often emphasised his ferocity and complexity as symptoms of a disturbed mind; but his ruthless economy is balanced by an exuberant revelation of human absurdity. His enormous versatility, partly masked by his use of unusual literary forms, has become recognised, as has

the value of his large body of verse. Swift's great satires never rest on individual targets: they challenge the reader's response to complex problems, often in unpalatable terms (is man a 'Yahoo'?). St Patrick's Cathedral preserves his Latin epitaph on himself, at rest 'where savage indignation can no further tear his heart', a 'strenuous defender of liberty'.

From A TALE OF A TUB[†]

Sect. II [History of Christianity]

Once upon a time, there was a man who had three sons by one wife, and all at a birth, neither could the midwife tell certainly which was the eldest. Their father died while they were young, and upon his deathbed, calling the lads to him, spoke thus:

5 'Sons, because I have purchased no estate, nor was born to any, I have long considered of some good legacies to bequeath you; and at last, with much care as well as expense, have provided each of you (here they are) a new coat. Now, you are to understand that these coats have two virtues contained in them: one is, that with good wearing 10 they will last you fresh and sound as long as you live; the other is that they will grow in the same proportion with your bodies, lengthening and widening of themselves so as to be always fit. Here; let me see them on you before I die. So; very well; pray, children, wear them clean and brush them often. You will find in my will (here it is) full instructions 15 in every particular concerning the wearing and management of your coats, wherein you must be very exact to avoid the penalties I have appointed for every transgression or neglect, upon which your future fortunes will entirely depend. I have also commanded in my will that you should live together in one house like brethren and friends, for 20 then you will be sure to thrive and not otherwise.'

A Tale of a Tub The title phrase suggests both something nonsensical and a distraction from external threats. The *Tale* has a complex form: a battery of introductory pieces leads into the allegory of the growth and perversion of the Christian sects; this in turn is gradually overwhelmed by digressions, the main one a celebration of madness. The alleged 'author' of the *Tale*, a 'modern' hack-writer, is undercut by Swift's deliberate disruption of

its form, which itself illustrates the decay of learning and religion. The extract introduces the allegory: Peter represents the Pope and the Roman Catholic Church; Martin: Luther and the moderate Church of England; Jack: Calvin and extreme, dissenting Protestantism. The coats are 'the doctrine and faith of Christianity'; the will, the New Testament

Here the story says this good father died, and the three sons went all together to seek their fortunes.

I shall not trouble you with recounting what adventures they met for the first seven years, any further than by taking notice that they carefully observed their father's will, and kept their coats in very good order, that they travelled through several countries, encountered a reasonable quantity of giants, and slew certain dragons.

Being now arrived at the proper age for producing themselves, they came up to town and fell in love with the ladies,[†] but especially three who about that time were in chief reputation, the Duchess d'Argent, Madame de Grands Tirres, and the Countess d'Orgueil. On their first appearance our three adventurers met with a very bad reception, and soon with great sagacity guessing out the reason, they quickly began to improve in the good qualities of the town: they writ, and rallied, and rhymed, and sung, and said, and said nothing; they drank, and fought, and whored, and slept, and swore, and took snuff; they went to new plays on the first night, haunted the chocolate-houses, beat the watch, lay on bulks,[†] and got claps; they bilked[†] hackney-coachmen, ran in debt with shopkeepers, and lay with their wives; they killed bailiffs, kicked fiddlers down stairs, eat at Locket's, loitered at Will's,[†] they talked of the drawing-room and never came there; dined with lords they never saw; whispered a duchess, and spoke never a word; exposed the scrawls of their laundress for billets-doux of quality; came ever just from court and were never seen in it; attended the Levee[†] *sub dio* [outside]; got a list of the peers by heart in one company, and with great familiarity retailed them in another. Above all, they constantly attended those Committees of Senators who are silent in the House,[†] and loud in the Coffee-House, where they nightly adjourn to chew the cud of politics, and are encompassed with a ring of disciples who lie in wait to catch up their droppings. The three brothers had acquired forty other qualifications of the like stamp too tedious to recount, and by consequence were justly reckoned the most accomplished persons in town. But all would not suffice and the ladies aforesaid continued still inflexible. To clear up which difficulty I must, with the reader's good leave and patience, have recourse to some points of weight which the authors of that age have not sufficiently illustrated.

For about this time it happened a sect arose whose tenets obtained and spread very far, especially in the *grand monde* and among

ladies covetousness, social ambition, and *Levee* royal reception
pride *House* of Commons; the above references are
bulks shop stalls all contemporary
bilked cheated
Locket's . . . Will's coffee-houses were fashionable places in London

everybody of good fashion. They worshipped a sort of idol[†] who, as their doctrine delivered, did daily create men by a kind of manufactory operation. This idol they placed in the highest parts of the house, on an altar erected about three foot. He was shewn in the posture of a Persian emperor, sitting on a superficies with his legs interwoven under him. This god had a goose[†] for his ensign, whence it is that some learned men pretend to deduce his original from Jupiter Capitolinus. At his left hand beneath the altar, Hell[†] seemed to open and catch at the animals the idol was creating; to prevent which, certain of his priests hourly flung in pieces of the uninformed mass or substance, and sometimes whole limbs already enlivened, which that horrid gulf insatiably swallowed, terrible to behold. The goose was also held a subaltern divinity or *deus minorum gentium* [god of lesser tribes], before whose shrine was sacrificed that creature[†] whose hourly food is human gore, and who is in so great renown abroad for being the delight and favourite of the Egyptian Cercopithecus. Millions of these animals were cruelly slaughtered every day to appease the hunger of that consuming deity.⁷⁵ The chief idol was also worshipped as the inventor of the yard and needle, whether as the god of seamen[†] or on account of certain other mystical attributes, hath not been sufficiently cleared.

The worshippers of this deity had also a system of their belief which seemed to turn upon the following fundamentals. They held the universe to be a large suit of clothes, which invests[†] everything: that the earth is invested by the air; the air is invested by the stars; and the stars are invested by the *primum mobile* [outer sphere]. Look on this globe of earth, you will find it to be a very complete and fashionable dress.[†]

What is that which some call land, but a fine coat faced with green? or the sea, but a waistcoat of water-tabby.[†] Proceed to the particular works of the creation, you will find how curious journeyman Nature hath been, to trim up the vegetable beaux; observe how sparkish a periwig adorns the head of a beech and what a fine doublet of white satin is worn by the birch. To conclude from all, what is man himself but a micro-coat,[†] or rather a complete suit of clothes with all its trimmings? As to his body, there can be no dispute; but examine even the acquirements of his mind, you will find them all contribute in their order towards furnishing out an exact dress. To instance no more: is not religion a cloak, honesty a pair of shoes worn out in the dirt, self-

idol a tailor
goose a tailor's iron is called a goose; the Roman temple of Jupiter was guarded by geese
Hell receptacle for scraps
that creature lice, food of the Egyptian monkey-god
seamen from puns on yard-arm and compass-needle (possibly also sexual puns – 'semen')
invests the planetary spheres enclose, hence: dress others
water-tabby watered silk
micro-coat microcosm, little world

love a surtout,[†] vanity a shirt, and conscience a pair of breeches which, though a cover for lewdness as well as nastiness, is easily slipped down for the service of both?

These *postulata* [assumptions] being admitted it will follow in due course of reasoning that those beings which the world calls improperly suits of clothes are in reality the most refined species of animals; or to proceed higher, that they are rational creatures, or men. For is it not manifest that they live, and move, and talk, and perform all other offices of human life? Are not beauty, and wit, and mien, and breeding, then inseparable proprieties? In short, we see nothing but them, hear nothing but them. Is it not they who walk the streets, fill up parliament coffee -, play -, bawdy-houses? 'Tis true indeed, that these animals which are vulgarly called suits of clothes, or dresses, do, according to certain compositions, receive different appellations. If one of them be trimmed up with a gold chain, and a red gown, and a white rod, and a great horse it is called a Lord Mayor; if certain ermines and furs be placed in a certain position we style them a Judge; and so an apt conjunction of lawn[†] and black satin we entitle a Bishop.

Others of these professors,[†] though agreeing in the main system, were yet more refined upon certain branches of it, and held that man was an animal compounded of two dresses, the natural and the celestial suit, which were the body and the soul; that the soul was the outward, and the body the inward clothing; that the latter was *ex traduce* [begotten by parents], but the former of daily creation and circumfusion. This last they proved by scripture, because in them[†] we live, and move, and have our being; as likewise by philosophy because they are all in all,[†] and all in every part. Besides, said they, separate these two, and you will find the body to be only a senseless unsavoury carcase. By all which it is manifest that the outward dress must needs be the soul.

To this system of religion were tagged several subaltern doctrines which were entertained with great vogue; as particularly, the faculties of the mind were deduced by the learned among them in this manner: embroidery was sheer wit; gold fringe was agreeable conversation; gold lace was repartee; a huge long periwig was humour, and a coat full of powder was very good railery; all which required abundance of finesse and delicatess to manage with advantage, as well as a strict observance after times and fashions.

I have with much pains and reading collected out of ancient authors this short summary of a body of philosophy and divinity, which seems to have been composed by a vein and race of thinking very different

surtout coat
lawn linen
professors religious believers

in them Acts 17.28;
all in all I Corinthians 15.28

from any other systems either ancient or modern. And it was not merely to entertain or satisfy the reader's curiosity but rather to give him light into several circumstances of the following story; that knowing the state of dispositions and opinions in an age so remote, he may better comprehend those great events which were the issue of them. I advise therefore the courteous reader to peruse with a world of application, again and again, whatever I have written upon this matter. And so leaving these broken ends, I carefully gather up the chief thread of my story, and proceed.

These opinions therefore were so universal, as well as the practices of them, among the refined part of court and town, that our three brother-adventurers as their circumstances then stood were strangely at a loss. For, on the one side, the three ladies they addressed themselves to (whom we have named already) were ever at the very top of the fashion, and abhorred all that were below it but the breadth of a hair.

On the other side, their father's will was very precise, and it was the main precept in it with the greatest penalties annexed, not to add to, or diminish from their coats one thread without a positive command in the will. Now the coats their father had left them were, 'tis true, of very good cloth and, besides, so neatly sewn you would swear they were all of a piece, but at the same time very plain, and with little or no ornament. And it happened that before they were a month in town,

great shoulder-knots[†] came up. Straight, all the world was shoulder-knots; no approaching the ladies' *ruelles*[†] without the quota of shoulder-knots. 'That fellow,' cries one, 'has no soul; where is his shoulder-knot?' Our three brethren soon discovered their want by sad experience, meeting in their walks with forty mortifications and indignities. If they went to the playhouse, the door-keeper showed them into the twelve-penny gallery. If they called a boat, says a waterman, 'I am first sculler'.[†] If they stepped to the Rose[†] to take a bottle, the drawer would cry, 'Friend, we sell no ale.' If they went to visit a lady,

a footman met them at the door with, 'Pray send up your message.' In this unhappy case they went immediately to consult their father's Will, they do? What temper[†] should they find? Obedience was absolutely necessary, and yet shoulder-knots appeared extremely requisite. After much thought one of the brothers who happened to be more book-learned than the other two, said he had found an expedient. 'Tis true,' said he, 'there is nothing here in this Will, *totidem verbis* [in so many

shoulder-knots decorative ribbons, c. 1670
(here, Church pageantry and ornament)
ruelles bedroom areas
sculler a sculler rowed a cheap boat (all their experiences indicate social exclusion)

Rose a tavern
temper way of moderating

175 words], making mention of shoulder-knots, but I dare conjecture we
may find them inclusive, or *totidem syllabis* [in so many syllables].¹
This distinction was immediately approved by all, and so they fell again
to examine the will. But their evil star had so directed the matter that
the first syllable was not to be found in the whole writing. Upon which
180 disappointment, he who found the former evasion took heart and said,
'Brothers, there is yet hopes; for though we cannot find them *totidem*
verbis, nor *totidem syllabis*, I dare engage we shall make them out *tertio*
modo, or *totidem literis* [a third way, in so many letters].² This discovery
was also highly commended, upon which they fell once more to the
185 scrutiny, and soon picked out S, H, O, U, L, D, E, R, when the same planet,
enemy to their repose, had wonderfully contrived that a K was not to
be found. Here was a weighty difficulty! But the distinguishing brother
(for whom we shall hereafter find a name) now his hand was in, proved
by a very good argument that K was a modern, illegitimate letter,
190 unknown to the learned ages nor anywhere to be found in ancient
manuscripts. 'Tis true,' said he, 'the word *Calendæ* hath in Q. V. C.
[some ancient manuscripts] been sometimes writ with a K, but errone-
ously, for in the best copies, it is ever spelt with a C. And by consequence
it was a gross mistake in our language to spell "knot" with a K'; but
195 that from henceforward he would take care it should be writ with a C.
Upon this all further difficulty vanished; shoulder-knots were made
clearly out to be *jure paterno* [by fatherly law], and our three gentlemen
swaggered with as large and as flaunting ones as the best.

But as human happiness is of a very short duration, so in those days
200 were human fashions upon which it entirely depends. Shoulder-knots
had their time, and we must now imagine them in their decline; for a
certain lord came just from Paris with fifty yards of gold lace upon his
coat, exactly trimmed after the court fashion of that month. In two
days all mankind appeared closed up in bars of gold lace: whoever durst
205 peep abroad without his complement of gold lace, was as scandalous
as a [eunuch], and as ill received among the women. What should our
three knights do in this momentous affair? They had sufficiently strained
a point already in the affair of shoulder-knots. Upon recourse to the
Will nothing appeared there but *altum silentium* [deep silence]. That of
210 the shoulder-knots was a loose, flying, circumstantial point; but this of
gold lace seemed too considerable an alteration without better warrant.
It did *aliquo modo essentia adherere* [somehow belong to the essence],
and therefore required a positive precept. But about this time it fell out
that the learned brother aforesaid had read *Aristotelis Dialectica*,
215 and especially that wonderful piece *de Interpretatione* [Aristotle on
Interpretation] which has the faculty of teaching its readers to find out
a meaning in everything but itself, like commentators on the Revelations
who proceed prophets without understanding a syllable of the text.

120 'Brothers,' said he, 'you are to be informed that of wills *duo sunt*
genera, nuncupatory and scriptory [there are two kinds, oral and
written]; that in the scriptory will here before us, there is no precept
or mention about gold lace, *conceditur* but, *si idem affirmetur de*
nuncupatorio, negatur [I agree; but I deny the same of the oral]. For
225 brothers, if you remember, we heard³ a fellow say when we were boys,
that he heard my father's man say, that he heard my father say, that he
would advise his sons to get gold lace on their coats, as soon as ever
they could procure money to buy it.⁴ 'By G—! that is very true,' cries
the other. 'I remember it perfectly well,' said the third. And so without
more ado they got the largest gold lace in the parish, and walked about
230 as fine as lords.

A while after there came up all in fashion a pretty sort of flame-
coloured⁵ satin for linings, and the mercer brought a pattern of it
immediately to our three gentlemen. 'An please your worships,' said
he, 'my Lord C[lifford] and Sir J[ohn] W[alters] had linings out of this
235 very piece last night; it takes wonderfully, and I shall not have a
remnant left enough to make my wife a pin-cushion, by tomorrow
morning at ten o'clock.' Upon this, they fell again to rummage the Will,
because the present case also required a positive precept, the lining
being held by orthodox writers to be of the essence of the coat. After
240 long search they could fix upon nothing to the matter in hand except a
short advice of their father's in the Will to take care of fire⁶ and put
out their candles⁷ before they went to sleep. This, though a good deal
for the purpose and helping very far towards self-conviction, yet not
seeming wholly of force to establish a command; and being resolved to
245 avoid farther scruple, as well as future occasion for scandal, says he
that was the scholar, 'I remember to have read in wills of a codicil⁸
annexed, which is indeed a part of the will, and what it contains hath
equal authority with the rest. Now, I have been considering of this
same will here before us, and I cannot reckon it to be complete, for
250 want of such a codicil. I will therefore fasten one in its proper place
very dexterously. I have had it by me some time; it was written by a
dog-keeper of my grandfather's, and talks a great deal (as good luck
would have it) of this very flame-coloured satin.' The project was
immediately approved by the other two; an old parchment scroll was
255 tagged on according to art, in the form of a codicil annexed, and the
satin bought and worn.

Next winter a player, hired for the purpose by the corporation of

we heard church traditions which went
beyond the scripture texts
flame-coloured the doctrine of Purgatory
fire Hell
candles passions

codicil appendix to a will, here the biblical
Apocrypha (not in the Protestant Old
Testament) where a dog appears in the Book
of Tobit

fringe-makers, acted his part in a new comedy all covered with silver fringe,[†] and according to the laudable custom, gave rise to that fashion. Upon which the brothers consulting their father's Will, to their great astonishment found these words, 'Item, I charge and command my said three sons to wear no sort of silver fringe upon or about their said coats,' etc., with a penalty in case of disobedience, too long here to insert. However after some pause, the brother so often mentioned for his erudition, who was well skilled in criticisms, had found in a certain author which he said should be nameless, that the same word which in the will is called fringe, does also signify a broomstick, and doubtless ought to have the same interpretation in this paragraph. This, another of the brothers disliked because of that epithet silver, which could not, be humbly conceived, in propriety of speech be reasonably applied to a broomstick; but it was replied upon him that this epithet was understood in a mythological and allegorical sense. However, he objected again why their father should forbid them to wear a broomstick on their coats, a caution that seemed unnatural and impertinent; upon which he was taken up short, as one who spoke irreverently of a mystery which doubtless was very useful and significant, but ought not to be over-curiously pried into or nicely reasoned upon. And in short, their father's authority being now considerably sunk, this expedient was allowed to serve as a lawful dispensation for wearing their full proportion of silver fringe.

A while after was revived an old fashion, long antiquated, of embroidery with Indian figures[†] of men, women, and children. Here they had no occasion to examine the Will. They remembered but too well how their father had always abhorred this fashion; that he made several paragraphs on purpose importing his utter detestation of it, and bestowing his everlasting curse to his sons, whenever they should wear it. For all this, in a few days they appeared higher in the fashion than anybody else in town. But they solved the matter by saying that these figures were not at all the same with those that were formerly worn and were meant in the will. Besides, they did not wear them in that sense as forbidden by their father, but as they were a commendable custom, and of great use to the public. That these rigorous clauses in the will did therefore require some allowance, and a favourable interpretation, and ought to be understood *cum grano salis* [with a grain of salt].

But fashions perpetually altering in that age, the scholastic brother grew weary of searching further evasions and solving everlasting

fringe religious ornamentation
Indian figures images of saints. Swift parodies
allegorical interpretation of scripture

contradictions. Resolved, therefore, at all hazards to comply with the modes of the world, they concerted matters together and agreed unanimously to lock up their father's Will in a strong box,[†] brought out of Greece or Italy (I have forgot which) and trouble themselves no further to examine it, but only refer to its authority whenever they thought fit. In consequence whereof, a while after it grew a general mode to wear an infinite number of points,[†] most of them tagged with silver: upon which, the scholar pronounced *ex cathedra*[†] [by (papal) authority] that points were absolutely *jure paterno*, as they might very well remember. 'Tis true indeed, the fashion prescribed somewhat more than were directly named in the Will; however, that they as heirs general of their father had power to make and add certain clauses for public emolument, though not deducible *totidem verbis* from the letter of the Will, or else, *multa absurda sequerentur* [many absurdities would follow]. This was understood for canonical,[†] and therefore on the following Sunday they came to church all covered with points.

The learned brother, so often mentioned, was reckoned the best scholar in all that or the next street to it; inasmuch as, having run something behind-hand with the world, he obtained the favour from a certain lord,[†] to receive him into his house and to teach his children. A while after the lord died, and he, by long practice upon his father's Will, found the way of contriving a deed of conveyance of that house to himself and his heirs; upon which he took possession, turned the young squires out, and received his brothers in their stead.

c. 1697

1704

strong box restriction of the New Testament
to Greek and Latin texts
points laces on clothing
ex cathedra reflects the Pope's claim of
doctrinal authority
canonical in the biblical text, authorised
certain lord Constantine the Great, a Christian
Roman Emperor (AD 306–37), who was
claimed to have conveyed secular power and
property to the Popes

A DESCRIPTION OF THE MORNING[†]

APRIL 1709

Now hardly here and there an hackney-coach
 Appearing, showed the ruddy morn's approach.
 Now Betty[†] from her master's bed had flown,
 And softly stole to discompose her own.
 5 The slip-shod[†] pretence from his master's door
 Had pared the street, and sprinkled round the floor.
 Now Moll had whirled her mop with dexterous airs,
 Prepared to scrub the entry and the stairs.
 The youth with broomy stumps began to trace
 10 The kennel edge, where wheels had worn the place.
 The small-coal[†] man was heard with cadence[†] deep,
 Till drowned in shriller notes of chimney-sweep.
 Duns[†] at his lordship's gate began to meet;
 And brickdust[†] Moll had screamed through half a street.
 15 The turnkey[†] now his flock returning sees,
 Duly let out a-nights to steal for fees.
 The watchful bailiffs take their silent stands;
 And schoolboys lag with satchels in their hands.

1709

1709

A DESCRIPTION OF A CITY SHOWER[†]

OCTOBER 1710

Careful observers may foretell the hour
 (By sure prognostics) when to dread a shower:
 While rain depends, * the pensive cat gives o'er
 Her frolics, and pursues her tail no more.
 5 Returning home at night, you'll find the sink
 Strike your offended sense with double stink.

impends

A Description of the morning Ironically presented in contrast to the sights and sounds of pastoral
Betty conventional maid's name
small-coal charcoal
cadence his street cry;
Duns bill collectors
brickdust an abrasive cleanser
turnkey gaoler, reliant on prisoners' fees
A Description of a City Shower City: the traditional commercial area. The mock-heroic diction contrasts with the mundane scene

If you be wise, then go not far to dine:
 You'll spend in coach-hire more than save in wine.
 A coming shower your shooting corns presage,
 Old achès[†] throb, your hollow tooth will rage.
 10 Sauntering in coffehouse is Dulman seen;
 He damns the climate, and complains of spleen.*
 Meanwhile the South, rising with dabbled[†] wings,
 A sable cloud athwart the welkin* flings
 15 That swilled more liquor that it could contain,
 And, like a drunkard, gives it up again.
 Brisk Susan whips her linen from the rope,
 While the first drizzling shower is borne aslope;
 Such is that sprinkling which some careless quean*
 20 Flirts on you from her mop, but not so clean:
 You fly, invoke the gods; then turning, stop
 To rail; she singing, still whirls on her mop.
 Not yet the dust had shunned th' unequal strife,
 But, aided by the wind, fought still for life,
 25 And wafted with its foe by violent gust,
 *Twas doubtful which was rain, and which was dust.
 Ah! where must needy poet seek for aid,
 When dust and rain at once his coat invade?
 His only coat, where dust confused with rain
 30 Roughen the nap, and leave a mingled stain.
 Now in contiguous drops the flood comes down,
 Threatening with deluge this devoted* town.
 To shops in crowds the daggled females fly,
 Pretend to cheapen[†] goods, but nothing buy.
 35 The Templar[†] spruce, while every spout's abroach,
 Stays till 'tis fair, yet seems to call a coach.
 The tucked-up sempstress walks with hasty strides,
 While streams run down her oiled umbrella's sides.
 Here various kinds, by various fortunes led,
 40 Commence acquaintance underneath a shed:
 Triumphant Tories,[†] and desponding Whigs,
 Forget their feuds, and join to save their wigs.
 Boxed in a chair[†] the beau impatient sits,
 While spouts run clattering o'er the roof by fits,

achès pronounced 'aiches' (2 syllables)
dabbled (also 'daggled'): splashed
cheapen haggle over
Templar lawyer from the Temple, an Inn of Court
Tories their party had recently taken power after the Whigs
chair leather-roofed sedan chair, for carrying passengers

doomed

45 And ever and anon with frightful din
The leather sounds; he trembles from within.
So when Troy[†] chairmen bore the wooden steed,
Pregnant with Greeks impatient to be freed
(Those bully Greeks, who, as the moderns do,
Instead of paying chairmen, run them through),
50 Laocoon struck the outside with his spear,
And each imprisoned hero quaked for fear,
Now from all parts the swelling kennels[†] flow,
And bear their trophies with them, as they go;
55 Filth of all hues and odours seem to tell
What street they sailed from, by their sight and smell.
They, as each torrent drives with rapid force,
From Smithfield,[†] or St. 'Pulchre's[†] shape their course,
And in huge confluent joined at Snow Hill ridge,
60 Fall from the Conduit* prone to Holborn-bridge.
Sweepings from butchers' stalls, dung, guts, and blood,
Drowned puppies, stinking sprats, all drenched in mud,
Dead cats, and turnip-tops, come tumbling down the flood.

1710

1710

From GULLIVER'S TRAVELS[†]

[Gulliver arrives in Lilliput]

I was surgeon successively in two ships, and made several voyages, for six years, to the East and West Indies, by which I got some addition to my fortune. My hours of leisure I spent in reading the best authors of ancient and modern, being always provided with a good number of books; and when I was ashore, in observing the manners and dispositions of the people, as well as learning their language, wherein I had a great facility by the strength of my memory.

Troy the hidden Greeks entered the city in the wooden horse (*Aeneid*, II.50)
kennels mid-street gutters
Smithfield meat market
St 'Pulchre's St Sepulchre's Church, up Snow Hill; the details are accurate. 11.61-3 parody Dryden's triplets; 1.63 his Alexandrine (six feet)
Gulliver's Travels Exploiting contemporary

interest in travels such as Dampier's voyages (p. 83), Swift has his narrator Lemuel Gulliver, ship's surgeon and then captain, describe his experiences in hitherto unknown lands, whose history, social organisation and morality reflect on those of Western Europe. The meaning of the satire, especially in Part IV, has been controversial; but the narrative skill has always been recognised

The last of these voyages not proving very fortunate I grew weary of the sea, and intended to stay at home with my wife and family. I removed from the Old Jury to Fetter Lane, and from thence to Wapping,[†] hoping to get business among the sailors; but it would not turn to account. After three years expectation that things would mend, I accepted an advantageous offer from Captain William Prichard, master of the *Antelope*, who was making a voyage to the South Sea. We set sail from Bristol May 4th, 1699, and our voyage at first was very prosperous.

It would not be proper, for some reasons, to trouble the reader with the particulars of our adventures in those seas: Let it suffice to inform him, that in our passage from thence to the East Indies, we were driven by a violent storm to the north-west of Van Diemen's Land.[†] By an observation, we found ourselves in the latitude of 30 degrees 2 minutes south. Twelve of our crew were dead by immoderate labour, and ill food, the rest were in a very weak condition. On the fifth of November, which was the beginning of summer in those parts, the weather being very hazy, the seamen spied a rock, within half a cable's length of the ship; but the wind was so strong, that we were driven directly upon it, and immediately split. Six of the crew, of whom I was one, having let down the boat into the sea, made a shift to get clear of the ship, and the rock. We rowed by my computation about three leagues,[†] till we were able to work no longer, being already spent with labour while we were in the ship. We therefore trusted ourselves to the mercy of the waves, and in about half an hour the boat was overset by a sudden flurry from the north. What became of my companions in the boat, as well as of those who escaped on the rock, or were left in the vessel, I cannot tell; but conclude they were all lost. For my own part, I swam as fortune directed me, and was pushed forward by wind and tide. I often let my legs drop, and could feel no bottom: but when I was almost gone, and able to struggle no longer, I found myself within my depth; and by this time the storm was much abated. The declivity was so small, that I walked near a mile before I got to the shore, which I conjectured was about eight a-clock in the evening. I then advanced forward near half a mile, but could not discover any sign of houses or inhabitants; at least I was in so weak a condition, that I did not observe them. I was extremely tired, and with that, and the heat of the weather, and about half a pint of brandy that I drank as I left the ship, I found myself much inclined to sleep. I lay down on the grass, which was very

Wapping Gulliver moves from the City to the dock area
Van Diemen's Land Tasmania, south of Australian mainland
three leagues about 9 miles

short and soft, where I slept sounder than ever I remember to have done in my life, and as I reckoned, above nine hours; for when I awaked, it was just daylight. I attempted to rise, but was not able to stir: for as I happened to lie on my back, I found my arms and legs were strongly fastened on each side to the ground; and my hair, which was long and thick, tied down in the same manner. I likewise felt several slender ligatures across my body, from my armpits to my thighs. I could only look upwards, the sun began to grow hot, and the light offended my eyes. I heard a confused noise about me, but in the posture I lay, could see nothing except the sky. In a little time I felt something alive moving on my left leg, which advancing gently forward over my breast, came almost up to my chin; when bending my eyes downwards as much as I could, I perceived it to be a human creature not six inches high, with a bow and arrow in his hands, and a quiver at his back. In the mean time, I felt at least forty more of the same kind (as I conjectured) following the first. I was in the utmost astonishment, and roared so loud, that they all ran back in a fright; and some of them, as I was afterwards told, were hurt with the falls they got by leaping from my sides upon the ground. However, they soon returned, and one of them, who ventured so far as to get a full sight of my face, lifting up his hands and eyes by way of admiration, cried out in a shrill, but distinct voice, *Hekinah Degul*: the others repeated the same words several times, but I then knew not what they meant. I lay all this while, as the reader may believe, in great uneasiness: at length, struggling to get loose, I had the fortune to break the strings, and wrench out the pegs that fastened my left arm to the ground; for, by lifting it up to my face I discovered the methods they had taken to bind me; and, at the same time, with a violent pull, which gave me excessive pain, I a little loosened the strings that tied down my hair on the left side, so that I was just able to turn my head about two inches. But the creatures ran off a second time, before I could seize them; whereupon there was a great shout in a very shrill accent, and after it ceased, I heard one of them cry aloud, *Tolgo Phonac*; when in an instant I felt above an hundred arrows discharged on my left hand, which pricked me like so many needles; and besides they shot another flight into the air, as we do bombs in Europe, whereof many, I suppose, fell on my body (though I felt them not), and some on my face, which I immediately covered with my left hand. When this shower of arrows was over, I fell a groaning with grief and pain; and then striving again to get loose, they discharged another volley larger than the first, and some of them attempted with spears to stick me in the sides; but, by good luck, I had on me a buff[†] jerkin, which they

buff yellow leather

could not pierce. I thought it the most prudent method to lie still, and my design was to continue so till night, when, my left hand being already loose, I could easily free myself; and as for the inhabitants, I had reason to believe I might be a match for the greatest armies they could bring against me, if they were all of the same size with him that I saw. But fortune disposed otherwise of me. When the people observed I was quiet, they discharged no more arrows: but by the noise I heard, I knew their numbers increased; and about four yards from me, over-against my right ear, I heard a knocking for above an hour, like that of people at work; when turning my head that way, as well as the pegs and strings would permit me, I saw a stage erected about a foot and a half from the ground, capable of holding four of the inhabitants, with two or three ladders to mount it: from whence one of them, who seemed to be a person of quality, made me a long speech, whereof I understood not one syllable. But I should have mentioned, that before the principal person began his oration, he cried out three times *Langro Dehul san* (these words and the former were afterwards repeated and explained to me). Whereupon immediately about fifty of the inhabitants came, and cut the strings that fastened the left side of my head, which gave me the liberty of turning it to the right, and of observing the person and gesture of him that was to speak. He appeared to be of a middle age, and taller than any of the other three who attended him, whereof one was a page that held up his train, and seemed to be somewhat longer than my middle finger; the other two stood one on each side to support him. He acted every part of an orator, and I could observe many periods of threatenings, and others of promises, pity and kindness. I answered in a few words, but in the most submissive manner, lifting up my left hand and both my eyes to the sun, as calling him for a witness; and being almost famished with hunger, having not eaten a morsel for some hours before I left the ship, I found the demands of nature so strong upon me, that I could not forbear showing my impatience (perhaps against the strict rules of decency) by putting my finger frequently on my mouth, to signify that I wanted food. The *Hurgo* (for so they call a great lord, as I afterwards learnt) understood me very well. He descended from the stage, and commanded that several ladders should be applied to my sides, on which above an hundred of the inhabitants mounted and walked towards my mouth, laden with baskets full of meat,[†] which had been provided, and sent thither by the King's orders upon the first intelligence he received of me. I observed there was the flesh of several animals, but could not distinguish them by the taste. There were shoulders, legs and loins shaped like those of

meat food in general

130 mutton, and very well dressed,[†] but smaller than the wings of a lark. I
eat[†] them by two or three at a mouthful, and took three loaves at a
time, about the bigness of musket bullets. They supplied me as fast as
they could, showing a thousand marks of wonder and astonishment at
my bulk and appetite. I then made another sign that I wanted drink.
135 They found by my eating that a small quantity would not suffice me,
and being a most ingenious people, they slung up with great dexterity
one of their largest hogsheads, then rolled it towards my hand, and
beat out the top; I drank it off at a draught, which I might well do, for
it did not hold half a pint, and tasted like a small wine of Burgundy,
but much more delicious. They brought me a second hogshead, which
140 I drank in the same manner, and made signs for more, but they had
none to give me. When I had performed these wonders, they shouted
for joy, and danced upon my breast, repeating several times as they did
at first, *Hekinah Degul*. They made me a sign that I should throw down
the two hogsheads, but first warned the people below to stand out of
145 the air, crying aloud, *Borach Mivola*, and when they saw the vessels
in the air, there was an universal shout of *Hekinah Degul*. I confess I
was often tempted while they were passing backwards and forwards
on my body to seize forty or fifty of the first that came in my reach,
and dash them against the ground. But the remembrance of what I had
150 felt, which probably might not be the worst they could do, and the
promise of honour I made them, for so I interpreted my submissive
behaviour, soon drove out these imaginations. Besides, I now considered
myself as bound by the laws of hospitality to a people who had treated
me with so much expense and magnificence. However in my thoughts I
155 could not sufficiently wonder at the intrepidity of these diminutive
mortals, who durst venture to mount and walk upon my body, while
one of my hands was at liberty, without trembling at the very sight of
so prodigious a creature as I must appear to them. After some time,
when they observed that I made no more demands for meat, there
160 appeared before me a person of high rank from his Imperial Majesty.
His Excellency having mounted on the small of my right leg, advanced
forwards up to my face, with about a dozen of his retinue. And
producing his credentials under the signet royal, which he applied close
to my eyes, spoke about ten minutes without any signs of anger, but
165 with a kind of determinate resolution; often pointing forwards, which,
as I afterwards found, was towards the capital city, about half a mile
distant, whither it was agreed by his Majesty in council that I must be
conveyed. I answered in few words, but to no purpose, and made a
sign with my hand that was loose, putting it to the other (but over his
170 Excellency's head, for fear of hurting him or his train) and then to my

dressed prepared

eat ate

own head and body, to signify that I desired my liberty. It appeared
that he understood me well enough, for he shook his head by way of
disapprobation, and held his hand in a posture to show that I must be
carried as a prisoner. However, he made other signs to let me understand
175 that I should have meat and drink enough, and very good treatment.
Whereupon I once more thought of attempting to break my bonds, but
again, when I felt the smart of their arrows upon my face and hands,
which were all in blisters, and many of the darts still sticking in them,
and observing likewise that the number of my enemies increased, I gave
tokens to let them know that they might do with me what they pleased.
180 Upon this the *Hurgo* and his train withdrew with much civility and
cheerful countenances. Soon after I heard a general shout, with frequent
repetitions of the words, *Peplom Selan*, and I felt great numbers of the
people on my left side relaxing the cords to such a degree that I was
able to turn upon my right, and to ease myself with making water;
185 which I very plentifully did, to the great astonishment of the people,
who conjecturing by my motions what I was going to do, immediately
opened to the right and left on that side to avoid the torrent which fell
with such noise and violence from me. But before this, they had daubed
my face and both my hands with a sort of ointment very pleasant to
the smell, which in a few minutes removed all the smart of their arrows.
190 These circumstances, added to the refreshment I had received by their
victuals and drink, which were very nourishing, disposed me to sleep. I
slept about eight hours, as I was afterwards assured; and it was no
wonder, for the physicians, by the Emperor's order, had mingled a
sleepy potion in the hogsheads of wine.

It seems that upon the first moment I was discovered sleeping on the
ground after my landing, the Emperor had early notice of it by an
express,[†] and determined in council that I should be tied in the manner
200 I have related (which was done in the night while I slept) that plenty of
meat and drink should be sent me, and a machine prepared to carry
me to the capital city.

This resolution perhaps may appear very bold and dangerous, and I
am confident would not be imitated by any prince in Europe on the
like occasion; however, in my opinion it was extremely prudent as well
as generous. For supposing these people had endeavoured to kill me
205 with their spears and arrows while I was asleep, I should certainly have
awaked with the first sense of smart, which might so far have roused
my rage and strength, as to have enabled me to break the strings
wherewith I was tied; after which, as they were not able to make
210 resistance, so they could expect no mercy.

express messenger

[*Gulliver in Brobdingnag*]^t

It is the custom that every Wednesday (which as I have before observed, was their sabbath) the King and Queen, with the royal issue of both sexes, dine together in the apartment of his Majesty, to whom I was now become a great favourite; and at these times my little chair and table were placed at his left hand before one of the saltcellars. This prince took a pleasure in conversing with me, enquiring into the manners, religion, laws, government, and learning of Europe, wherein I gave him the best account I was able. His apprehension was so clear, and his judgment so exact, that he made very wise reflections and observations upon all I said. But, I confess, that after I had been a little too copious in talking of my own beloved country, of our trade, and wars by sea and land, of our schisms[†] in religion, and parties in the state, the prejudices of his education prevailed so far, that he could not forbear taking me up in his right hand, and stroking me gently with the other, after an hearty fit of laughing, asked me whether I were a Whig or a Tory. Then turning to his first minister, who waited behind him with a white staff, near as tall as the mainmast of the *Royal Sovereign*, he observed how contemptible a thing was human grandeur, which could be mimicked by such diminutive insects as I: 'And yet,' said he, 'I dare engage, these creatures have their titles and distinctions of honour, they contrive little nests and burrows, that they call houses and cities; they make a figure in dress and equipage,[†] they love, they fight, they dispute, they cheat, they betray.' And thus he continued on, while my colour came and went several times, with indignation to hear our noble country, the mistress of arts and arms, the scourge of France, the arbitress of Europe, the seat of virtue, piety, honour and truth, the pride and envy of the world, so contemptuously treated.

But, as I was not in a condition to resent injuries, so, upon mature thoughts, I began to doubt whether I were injured or no. For, after having been accustomed several months to the sight and converse of this people, and observed every object upon which I cast my eyes to be of proportionable magnitude, the horror I had first conceived from their bulk and aspect was so far worn off, that if I had then beheld a company of English lords and ladies in their finery and birthday[†] clothes, acting their several parts in the most courtly manner of strutting, and bowing and prating; to say the truth, I should have been strongly tempted to laugh as much at them as this King and his grantees did at me. Neither indeed could I forbear smiling at myself, when the Queen used to place me upon her hand towards a looking-glass, by which both our persons

[*Gulliver in Brobdingnag*] Gulliver's second voyage takes him to the land of giants, where he becomes a kind of pet to the royal family

schisms divisions

equipage carriage and servants

birthday fine, for king's birthday

40 appeared before me in full view together; and there could nothing be more ridiculous than the comparison: so that I really began to imagine myself dwindled many degrees below my usual size.

Nothing angered and mortified me so much as the Queen's dwarf, who being of the lowest stature that was ever in that country (for I verily think he was not full thirty foot high) became so insolent at seeing a creature so much beneath him, that he would always affect to swagger and look big as he passed by me in the Queen's antechamber, while I was standing on some table talking with the lords or ladies of the court, and he seldom failed of a smart word or two upon my littleness; against which I could only revenge myself by calling him brother, challenging him to wrestle, and such repartees as are usual in the mouths of court pages. One day at dinner this malicious little cub was so nettled with something I had said to him, that raising himself upon the frame of her Majesty's chair, he took me up by the middle, as I was sitting down, not thinking any harm, and let me drop into a large silver bowl of cream, and then ran away as fast as he could. I fell over head and ears, and if I had not been a good swimmer, it might have gone very hard with me; for *Glumdalclitch* in that instant happened to be at the other end of the room, and the Queen was in such a fright that she wanted[†] presence of mind to assist me. But my little nurse ran to my relief, and took me out, after I had swallowed above a quart of cream. I was put to bed; however I received no other damage than the loss of a suit of clothes, which was utterly spoiled. The dwarf was soundly whipped and as a further punishment, forced to drink up the bowl of cream, into which he had thrown me; neither was he ever restored to favour: for, soon after, the Queen bestowed him to a lady of high quality, so that I saw him no more, to my very great satisfaction; for I could not tell to what extremities such a malicious urchin might have carried his resentment.

70 He had before served me a scurvy trick, which set the Queen a laughing, although at the same time she were heartily vexed, and would have immediately cashiered[†] him, if I had not been so generous as to intercede. Her Majesty had taken a marrow-bone upon her plate, and after knocking out the marrow, placed the bone again in the dish erect as it stood before; the dwarf watching his opportunity, while *Glumdalclitch* was gone to the sideboard, mounted upon the stool she stood on to take care of me at meals, took me up in both hands, and squeezing my legs together, wedged them into the marrow-bone above my waist, where I stuck for some time, and made a very ridiculous figure. I believe it was near a minute before any one knew what was become of me, for I thought it below me to cry out. But, as princes

wanted lacked

cashiered dismissed

seldom get their meat hot, my legs were not scalded, only my stockings and breeches in a sad condition. The dwarf at my entreaty had no other punishment than a sound whipping.

I was frequently rallied[†] by the Queen upon account of my fearfulness, and she used to ask me whether the people of my country were as great cowards as myself. The occasion was this. The kingdom is much pestered with flies in summer, and these odious insects, each of them as big as a Dunstable Lark, hardly gave me any rest while I sat at dinner, with their continual humming and buzzing about my ears. They would sometimes alight upon my victuals, and leave their loathsome excrement or spawn behind, which to me was very visible though not to the natives of that country, whose large optics were not so acute as mine in viewing smaller objects. Sometimes they would fix upon my nose or forehead, where they stung me to the quick, smelling very offensively, and I could easily trace that viscous matter, which our naturalists tell us enables those creatures to walk with their feet upwards upon a ceiling. I had much ado to defend myself against these detestable animals, and could not forbear starting when they came on my face. It was the common practice of the dwarf to catch a number of these insects in his hand as schoolboys do among us, and let them out suddenly under my nose on purpose to frighten me, and divert the Queen. My remedy was to cut them in pieces with my knife as they flew in the air, wherein my dexterity was much admired.

I remember one morning when *Glumdalclitch* had set me in my box[†] upon a window, as she usually did in fair days to give me air (for I durst not venture to let the box be hung on a nail out of the window, as we do with cages in England) after I had lifted up one of my sashes, and sat down at my table to eat a piece of sweet cake for my breakfast, above twenty wasps, allured by the smell, came flying into the room, humming louder than the drones of as many bagpipes. Some of them seized my cake, and carried it piecemeal away, others flew about my head and face, confounding me with the noise, and putting me in the utmost terror of their stings. However I had the courage to rise and draw my hanger,[†] and attack them in the air. I dispatched four of them, but the rest got away, and I presently shut my window. These insects were as large as partridges, I took out their stings, found them an inch and a half long, and as sharp as needles. I carefully preserved them all, and having since shown them with some other curiosities in several parts of Europe, upon my return to England I gave three of them to Gresham College,[†] and kept the fourth for myself.

rallied teased
box like a doll's house, with sash-windows
hanger short sword

Gresham College early home of the Royal Society, and of a curio collection

[Gulliver praises England to the King]

He was perfectly astonished with the historical account I gave him of our affairs during the last century, protesting it was only a heap of conspiracies, rebellions, murders, massacres, revolutions, banishments, the very worst effects that avarice, faction, hypocrisy, perfidiousness, cruelty, rage, madness, hatred, envy, lust, malice, or ambition could produce.

His Majesty in another audience was at the pains to recapitulate the sum of all I had spoken, compared the questions he made with the answers I had given; then taking me into his hands, and stroking me gently, delivered himself in these words, which I shall never forget, nor the manner he spoke them in. 'My little friend *Grildrig*; you have made a most admirable panegyric upon your country. You have clearly proved that ignorance, idleness and vice are the proper ingredients for qualifying a legislator; that laws are best explained, interpreted, and applied by those whose interest and abilities lie in perverting, confounding, and eluding them. I observe among you some lines of an institution, which in its original might have been tolerable, but these half erased, and the rest wholly blurred and blotted by corruptions. It doth not appear from all you have said, how any one virtue is required towards the procurement of any one station among you, much less that men are ennobled on account of their virtue, that priests are advanced for their piety or learning, soldiers for their conduct or valour, judges for their integrity, senators[†] for the love of their country, or counsellors for their wisdom. As for yourself (continued the King) who have spent the greatest part of your life in travelling, I am well disposed to hope you may hitherto have escaped many vices of your country. But, by what I have gathered from your own relation, and the answers I have with much pains wringed and extorted from you, I cannot but conclude the bulk of your natives, to be the most pernicious race of little odious vermin that nature ever suffered to crawl upon the surface of the earth.'

Nothing but an extreme love of truth could have hindered me from concealing this part of my story. It was in vain to discover[†] my resentments, which were always turned into ridicule; and I was forced to rest with patience while my noble and most beloved country was so injuriously treated. I am heartily sorry as any of my readers can possibly be, that such an occasion was given: but this prince happened to be so curious and inquisitive upon every particular, that it could not consist either with gratitude or good manners to refuse giving him what satisfaction I was able. Yet thus much I may be allowed to say in my

senators MPs

discover reveal

own vindication, that I artfully eluded many of his questions, and gave to every point a more favourable turn by many degrees than the strictness of truth would allow. For, I have always borne that laudable partiality to my own country, which Dionysius¹ Halicarnassensis with so much justice recommends to an historian. I would hide the frailties and deformities of my political mother, and place her virtues and beauties in the most advantageous light. This was my sincere endeavour in those many discourses I had with that mighty monarch, although it unfortunately failed of success.

But, great allowances should be given to a King who lives wholly secluded from the rest of the world, and must therefore be altogether unacquainted with the manners and customs that most prevail in other nations: the want of which knowledge will ever produce many prejudices, and a certain narrowness of thinking, from which we and the politer countries of Europe are wholly exempted. And it would be hard indeed, if so remote a prince's notions of virtue and vice were to be offered as a standard for all mankind.

To confirm what I have now said, and further to show the miserable effects of a confined education, I shall here insert a passage which will hardly obtain belief. In hopes to ingratiate myself farther into his Majesty's favour, I told him of an invention discovered between three and four hundred years ago, to make a certain powder, into an heap of which the smallest spark of fire falling, would kindle the whole in a moment, although it were as big as a mountain, and make it all fly up in the air together, with a noise and agitation greater than thunder. That a proper quantity of this powder rammed into an hollow tube of brass or iron, according to its bigness, would drive a ball of iron or lead with such violence and speed as nothing was able to sustain its force. That the largest balls thus discharged would not only destroy whole ranks of an army at once, but batter the strongest walls to the ground, sink down ships with a thousand men in each, to the bottom of the sea; and when linked together by a chain, would cut through masts and rigging, divide hundreds of bodies in the middle, and lay all waste before them. That we often put this powder into large hollow balls of iron, and discharged them by an engine into some city we were besieging, which would rip up the pavements, tear the houses to pieces, burst and throw splinters on every side, dashing out the brains of all who came near. That I knew the ingredients very well, which were cheap, and common; I understood the manner of compounding them, and could direct his workmen how to make those tubes of a size proportionable to all other things in his Majesty's kingdom, and the

Dionysius
Rome
Greek historian in first century BC

largest need not be above an hundred foot long; twenty or thirty of which tubes, charged with the proper quantity of powder and balls, would batter down the walls of the strongest town in his dominions in a few hours, or destroy the whole metropolis, if ever it should pretend¹ to dispute his absolute commands. This I humbly offered to his Majesty as a small tribute of acknowledgment in return of so many marks that I had received of his royal favour and protection.

The King was struck with horror at the description I had given of those terrible engines, and the proposal I had made. He was amazed how so impotent and grovelling an insect as I (these were his expressions) could entertain such inhuman ideas, and in so familiar a manner as to appear wholly unmoved at all the scenes of blood and desolation, which I had painted as the common effects of those destructive machines, whereof, he said, some evil genius, enemy to mankind, must have been the first contriver. As for himself, he protested, that although few things delighted him so much as new discoveries in art or in nature, yet he would rather lose half his kingdom than be privy to such a secret, which he commanded me, as I valued my life, never to mention any more.

A strange effect of narrow principles and short views! that a prince possessed of every quality which procures veneration, love and esteem; of strong parts,¹ great wisdom and profound learning, endued with admirable talents for government, and almost adored by his subjects, should from a nice¹ unnecessary scruple, whereof in Europe we can have no conception, let slip an opportunity put into his hands, that would have made him absolute master of the lives, the liberties, and the fortunes of his people. Neither do I say this with the least intention to detract from the many virtues of that excellent King, whose character I am sensible will on this account be very much lessened in the opinion of an English reader: but, I take this defect among them to have risen from their ignorance, they not having hitherto reduced politics into a science, as the more acute wits of Europe have done. For, I remember very well, in a discourse one day with the King, when I happened to say there were several thousand books among us written upon the art of government, it gave him (directly contrary to my intention) a very mean opinion of our understandings. He professed both to abominate and despise all mystery, refinement, and intrigue, either in a prince or a minister. He could not tell what I meant by secrets of state, where an enemy or some rival nation were not in the case. He confined the knowledge of governing within very narrow bounds; to common sense and reason, to justice and lenity, to the speedy determination of civil and criminal causes; with some other obvious topics which are not

pretend attempt
parts talents

nice fastidious

worth considering. And, he gave it for his opinion, that whoever could make two ears of corn, or two blades of grass to grow upon a spot of ground where only one grew before, would deserve better of mankind, and do more essential service to his country than the whole race of politicians put together.

The learning of this people is very defective, consisting only in morality, history, poetry and mathematics, wherein they must be allowed to excel. But, the last of these is wholly applied to what may be useful in life, to the improvement of agriculture and all mechanical arts; so that among us it would be little esteemed. And as to ideas, entities, abstractions and transcendentals,[†] I could never drive the least conception into their heads. . . .

[*The Immortals of Luggnagg*][†]

One day in much good company I was asked by a person of quality, whether I had seen any of their *Struldbruggs* or immortals. I said I had not, and desired he would explain to me what he meant by such an appellation applied to a mortal creature. He told me that sometimes, though very rarely, a child happened to be born in a family with a red circular spot in the forehead, directly over the left eyebrow, which was an infallible mark that it should never die. The spot, as he described it, was about the compass of a silver threepence, but in the course of time grew larger, and changed its colour; for at twelve years old it became green, so continued till five and twenty, then turned to a deep blue; at five and forty it grew coal black, and as large as an English shilling, but never admitted any farther alteration. He said these births were so rare, that he did not believe there could be above eleven hundred *Struldbruggs* of both sexes in the whole kingdom, of which he computed about fifty in the metropolis, and among the rest a young girl born about three years ago. That these productions were not peculiar to any family but a mere effect of chance, and the children of the *Struldbruggs* themselves were equally mortal with the rest of the people.

I freely own myself to have been struck with inexpressible delight upon hearing this account: and the person who gave it me happening to understand the *Balnibarbian*[‡] language, which I spoke very well, I could not forbear breaking out into expressions perhaps a little too extravagant. I cried out as in a rapture: 'Happy nation where every child hath at least a chance for being immortal! Happy people who

ideas . . . transcendentals all unpractical
The Immortals of Luggnagg In the third
 voyage, Gulliver has arrived in the kingdom
 of Luggnagg

Balnibarbi recently visited by G.

25 enjoy so many living examples of ancient virtue, and have masters ready to instruct them in the wisdom of all former ages! But, happiest beyond all comparison are those excellent *Struldbruggs*, who, born exempt from that universal calamity of human nature, have their minds free and disengaged, without the weight and depression of spirits caused by the continual apprehension of death.' I discovered my admiration[†] that I had not observed any of these illustrious persons at court: the black spot on the forehead being so remarkable a distinction that I could not have easily overlooked it; and it was impossible that his Majesty, a most judicious prince, should not provide himself with a good number of such wise and able counsellors. Yet perhaps the virtue of those reverend sages was too strict for the corrupt and libertine manners of a court. And we often find by experience that young men are too opinionative and volatile to be guided by the sober dictates of their seniors. However, since the King was pleased to allow me access to his royal person, I was resolved upon the very first occasion to deliver my opinion to him on this matter freely and at large by the help of my interpreter; and whether he would please to take my advice or no, yet in one thing I was determined, that his Majesty having frequently offered me an establishment in this country, I would with great thankfulness accept the favour, and pass my life here in the conversation of those superior beings the *Struldbruggs*, if they would please to admit me.

The gentleman to whom I addressed my discourse, because (as I have already observed) he spoke the language of *Balnibarbi*, said to me with a sort of a smile, which usually ariseth from pity to the ignorant, that he was glad of any occasion to keep me among them, and desired my permission to explain to the company what I had spoke. He did so, and they talked together for some time in their own language, whereof I understood not a syllable, neither could I observe by their countenances what impression my discourse had made on them. After a short silence the same person told me that his friends and mine (so he thought fit to express himself) were very much pleased with the judicious remarks I had made on the great happiness and advantages of immortal life, and they were desirous to know in a particular manner, what scheme of living I should have formed to myself, if it had fallen to my lot to have been born a *Struldbrugg*.

I answered, it was easy to be eloquent on so copious and delightful a subject, especially to me who have been often apt to amuse myself with visions of what I should do if I were a king, a general, or a great lord; and upon this very case I had frequently run over the whole system

how I should employ myself, and pass the time if I were sure to live for ever.

That, if it had been my good fortune to come into the world a *Struldbrugg*, as soon as I could discover my own happiness by understanding the difference between life and death, I would first resolve by all arts and methods whatsoever to procure myself riches; in the pursuit of which by thrift and management, I might reasonably expect in about two hundred years to be the wealthiest man in the kingdom. In the second place, I would from my earliest youth apply myself to the study of arts and sciences, by which I should arrive in time to excel all others in learning. Lastly I would carefully record every action and event of consequence that happened in the public, impartially draw the characters of the several successions of princes, and great ministers of state, with my own observations on every point. I would exactly set down the several changes in customs, language, fashions of dress, diet and diversions. By all which acquisitions, I should be a living treasury of knowledge and wisdom, and certainly become the oracle of the nation.

I would never marry after threescore, but live in an hospitable manner, yet still on the saving side. I would entertain myself in forming and directing the minds of hopeful young men, by convincing them from my own remembrance, experience and observation, fortified by numerous examples, of the usefulness of virtue in public and private life. But, my choice and constant companions should be a set of my own immortal brotherhood, among whom I would elect a dozen from the most ancient down to my own contemporaries. Where any of these wanted fortunes, I would provide them with convenient lodges round my own estate, and have some of them always at my table, only mingling a few of the most valuable among you mortals, whom length of time would harden me to lose with little or no reluctance, and treat your posterity after the same manner, just as a man diverts himself with the annual succession of pinks and tulips in his garden, without regretting the loss of those which withered the preceding year.

These *Struldbruggs* and I would mutually communicate our observations and memorials through the course of time, remark the several gradations by which corruption steals into the world, and oppose it in every step, by giving perpetual warning and instruction to mankind; which, added to the strong influence of our own example, would probably prevent that continual degeneracy of human nature so justly complained of in all ages.

Add to all this, the pleasure of seeing the various revolutions of states and empires, the changes in the lower and upper world, ancient cities in ruins, and obscure villages become the seats of kings; famous rivers lessening into shallow brooks, the ocean leaving one coast dry, and overwhelming another; the discovery of many countries yet unknown;

barbarity over-running the politest nations, and the most barbarous become civilised. I should then see the discovery of the longitude, the perpetual motion, the universal medicine, and many other great inventions brought to the utmost perfection.

What wonderful discoveries should we make in astronomy, by outliving and confirming our own predictions, by observing the progress and returns of comets, with the changes of motion in the sun, moon and stars.

I enlarged upon many other topics which the natural desire of endless life and sublunary happiness could easily furnish me with. When I had ended, and the sum of my discourse had been interpreted as before to the rest of the company, there was a good deal of talk among them in the language of the country, not without some laughter at my expense.

At last the same gentleman who had been my interpreter said he was desired by the rest to set me right in a few mistakes which I had fallen into through the common imbecility of human nature, and upon that allowance was less answerable for them. That, this breed of *Struldbruggs* was peculiar to their country, for there were no such people either in *Bahibarbi* or Japan, where he had the honour to be ambassador from his Majesty, and found the natives in both those kingdoms very hard to believe that the fact was possible, and it appeared from my astonishment when he first mentioned the matter to me, that I received it as a thing wholly new, and scarcely to be credited. That in the two kingdoms above mentioned, where during his residence he had conversed very much, he observed long life to be the universal desire and wish of mankind. That whoever had one foot in the grave, was sure to hold back the other as strongly as he could. That the oldest had still hopes of living one day longer, and looked on death as the greatest evil, from which nature always prompted him to retreat; only in this island of *Luggnagg* the appetite for living was not so eager, from the continual example of the *Struldbruggs* before their eyes.

That the system of living contrived by me was unreasonable and unjust, because it supposed a perpetuity of youth, health, and vigour, which no man could be so foolish to hope, however extravagant he may be in his wishes. That the question therefore was not whether a man would choose to be always in the prime of youth, attended with prosperity and health, but how he would pass a perpetual life under all the usual disadvantages which old age brings along with it. For although few men will avow their desires of being immortal upon such hard conditions, yet in the two kingdoms before-mentioned of *Bahibarbi* and Japan, he observed that every man desired to put off death for sometime longer, let it approach ever so late, and he rarely heard of any man who died willingly, except he were incited by the extremity of grief or torture. And he appealed to me whether in those countries I

155 had travelled as well as my own, I had not observed the same general disposition.

160 After this preface he gave me a particular account of the *Struldbruggs* among them. He said they commonly acted like mortals, till about thirty years old, after which by degrees they grew melancholy and dejected, increasing in both till they came to four-score. This he learned from their own confession; for otherwise, there not being above two or three of that species born in an age, they were too few to form a general observation by. When they came to four-score years, which he reckoned the extremity of living in this country, they had not only all the follies and infirmities of other old men, but many more which arose from the dreadful prospects of never dying. They were not only opinionative, peevish, covetous, morose, vain, talkative, but incapable of friendship, and dead to all natural affection, which never descended below their grandchildren. Envy and impotent desires are their prevailing passions. But those objects against which their envy seems principally directed, are the vices of the younger sort, and the deaths of the old. By reflecting on the former they find themselves cut off from all possibility of pleasure; and whenever they see a funeral, they lament and repine that others are gone to an harbour of rest, to which they themselves never can hope to arrive. They have no remembrance of any thing but what they learned and observed in their youth and middle age, and even that is very imperfect. And for the truth or particulars of any fact it is safer to depend on common traditions than upon their best recollections. The least miserable among them appear to be those who turn to dotage, and entirely lose their understandings; these meet with more pity and assistance, because they want many bad qualities which abound in others.

180 If a *Struldbrugg* happen to marry one of his own kind, the marriage is dissolved of course by the courtesy of the kingdom, as soon as the younger of the two comes to be four-score. For the law thinks it a reasonable indulgence, that those who are condemned without any fault of their own to a perpetual continuance in the world, should not have their misery doubled by the load of a wife.

185 As soon as they have completed the term of eighty years, they are looked on as dead in law; their heirs immediately succeed to their estates, only a small pittance is reserved for their support, and the poor ones are maintained at the public charge. After that period they are held incapable of any employment of trust or profit, they cannot purchase lands or take leases, neither are they allowed to be witnesses in any cause, either civil or criminal, not even for the decision of meres' and bounds.

meres landmarks

200 At ninety they lose their teeth and hair, they have at that age no distinction of taste, but eat and drink whatever they can get, without relish or appetite. The diseases they were subject to still continue without increasing or diminishing. In talking they forget the common appellation of things, and the names of persons, even of those who are their nearest friends and relations. For the same reason they never can amuse themselves with reading, because their memory will not serve to carry them from the beginning of a sentence to the end; and by this defect they are deprived of the only entertainment whereof they might otherwise be capable.

205 The language of this country being always upon the flux, the *Struldbruggs* of one age do not understand those of another, neither are they able after two hundred years to hold any conversation (farther than by a few general words) with their neighbours the mortals, and thus they lie under the disadvantage of living like foreigners in their own country.

210 This was the account given me of the *Struldbruggs*, as near as I can remember. I afterwards saw five or six of different ages, the youngest not above two hundred years old, who were brought to me at several times by some of my friends; but although they were told that I was a great traveller, and had seen all the world, they had not the least curiosity to ask me a question; only desired I would give them *Slumskudask*, or a token of remembrance, which is a modest way of begging, to avoid the law that strictly forbids it, because they are provided for by the public, although indeed with a very scanty allowance.

220 They are despised and hated by all sorts of people; when one of them is born, it is reckoned ominous, and their birth is recorded very particularly; so that you may know their age by consulting the registry, which however hath not been kept above a thousand years past, or at least hath been destroyed by time or public disturbances. But the usual way of computing how old they are, is by asking them what kings or great persons they can remember, and then consulting history, for infallibly the last prince in their mind did not begin his reign after they were four-score years old.

225 They were the most mortifying sight I ever beheld, and the women more horrible than the men. Besides the usual deformities in extreme old age, they acquired an additional ghastliness in proportion to their number of years, which is not to be described, and among half a dozen I soon distinguished which was the eldest, although there was not above a century or two between them.

235 The reader will easily believe, that from what I had heard and seen, my keen appetite for perpetuity of life was much abated. I grew heartily ashamed of the pleasing visions I had formed, and thought no tyrant could invent a death into which I would not run with pleasure from

240 such a life. The King heard of all that had passed between me and my friends upon this occasion, and rallied me very pleasantly, wishing I would send a couple of *Struldbruggs* to my own country, to arm our people against the fear of death; but this it seems is forbidden by the fundamental laws of the kingdom, or else I should have been well content with the trouble and expense of transporting them.

245 I could not but agree that the laws of this kingdom relating to the *Struldbruggs* were founded upon the strongest reasons, and such as any other country would be under the necessity of enacting in the like circumstances. Otherwise, as avarice is the necessary consequent of old age, those immortals would in time become proprietors of the whole nation, and engross the civil power, which, for want of abilities to manage, must end in the ruin of the public.

[*Houyhnhnms and Yahoos*][†]

As I ought to have understood human nature much better than I supposed it possible for my master to do, so it was easy to apply the character he gave of the *Yahoos* to myself and my countrymen, and I believed I could yet make farther discoveries from my own observation.

25 I therefore often begged his favour to let me go among the herds of *Yahoos* in the neighbourhood, to which he always very graciously consented, being perfectly convinced that the hatred I bore those brutes would never suffer me to be corrupted by them; and his honour ordered one of his servants, a strong sorrel nag,[‡] very honest and goodnatured, to be my guard, without whose protection I durst not undertake such adventures. For I have already told the reader how much I was pestered by those odious animals upon my first arrival. And I afterwards failed very narrowly three or four times of falling into their clutches, when I happened to stray at any distance without my hanger. And I have reason to believe they had some imagination that I was of their own species, which I often assisted myself, by stripping up my sleeves, and showing my naked arms and breast in their sight, when my protector was with me. At which times they would approach as near as they durst, and imitate my actions after the manner of monkeys, but ever with great signs of hatred, as a tame jackdaw with cap and stockings is always persecuted by the wild ones, when he happens to be got among them.

[*Houyhnhnms and Yahoos*] In his final voyage Gulliver is marooned by his men in the land of the *houyhnhnms* (pronounced 'hwee-nim', as neighing). These horse-like creatures are instinctively rational, and rule over humanoid

naked creatures, *Yahoos*, whose savagery, greed, lust and corruption Gulliver's 'Master' describes
 sorrel nag reddish-brown horse

25 They are prodigiously nimble from their infancy; however, I once caught a young male of three years old, and endeavoured by all marks of tenderness to make it quiet; but the little imp fell a squalling and scratching, and biting with such violence, that I was forced to let it go, and it was high time, for a whole troop of old ones came about us at the noise, but finding the cub was safe (for away it ran) and my sorrel nag being by, they durst not venture near us. I observed the young animal's flesh to smell very rank, and the stink was somewhat between a weasel and a fox, but much more disagreeable. I forgot another circumstance (and perhaps I might have the reader's pardon, if it were wholly omitted) that while I held the odious vermin in my hands, it voided its filthy excrements of a yellow liquid substance, all over my clothes; but by good fortune there was a small brook hard by, where I washed myself as clean as I could, although I durst not come into my master's presence, until I were sufficiently aired.

30 By what I could discover, the *Yahoos* appear to be the most unteachable of all animals, their capacities never reaching higher than to draw or carry burthens. Yet I am of opinion this defect ariseth chiefly from a perverse, restive disposition. For they are cunning, malicious, treacherous and revengeful. They are strong and hardy, but of a cowardly spirit, and by consequence, insolent, abject, and cruel. It is observed, that the red-haired of both sexes are more libidinous and mischievous than the rest, whom yet they much exceed in strength and activity.

40 The *Houyhnhnms* keep the *Yahoos* for present use in huts not far from the house; but the rest are sent abroad to certain fields, where they dig up roots, eat several kinds of herbs, and search about for carrion, or sometimes catch weasels and *Luhimuhs* (a sort of wild rat) which they greedily devour. Nature hath taught them to dig deep holes with their nails on the side of a rising ground, wherein they lie by themselves, only the kennels of the females are larger, sufficient to hold two or three cubs.

50 They swim from their infancy like frogs, and are able to continue long under water, where they often take fish, which the females carry home to their young. And upon this occasion, I hope the reader will pardon my relating an odd adventure.

55 Being one day abroad with my protector the sorrel nag, and the weather exceeding hot, I entreated him to let me bathe in a river that was near. He consented, and I immediately stripped myself stark naked, and went down softly into the stream. It happened that a young female *Yahoo* standing behind a bank saw the whole proceeding, and enflamed by desire, as the nag and I conjectured, came running with all speed, and leaped into the water within five yards of the place where I bathed. I was never in my life so terribly frightened; the nag was grazing at some

sorrel nag reddish-brown horse

distance, not suspecting any harm. She embraced me after a most fulsome manner; I roared as loud as I could, and the nag came galloping towards me, whereupon she quitted her grasp with the utmost reluctance, and leaped upon the opposite bank, where she stood gazing and howling all the time I was putting on my clothes.

This was matter of diversion to my master and his family, as well as of mortification to myself. For now I could no longer deny that I was a real *Yahoo*, in every limb and feature, since the females had a natural propensity to me as one of their own species: neither was the hair of this brute of a red colour, (which might have been some excuse for an appetite a little irregular) but black as a sloe, and her countenance did not make an appearance altogether so hideous as the rest of the kind; for, I think, she could not be above eleven years old.

Having lived three years in this country, the reader I suppose will expect that I should, like other travellers, give him some account of the manners and customs of its inhabitants, which it was indeed my principal study to learn.

As these noble *Houyhnhnms* are endowed by nature with a general disposition to all virtues, and have no conceptions or ideas of what is evil in a rational creature, so their grand maxim is, to cultivate reason, and to be wholly governed by it. Neither is reason among them a point problematical as with us, where men can argue with plausibility on both sides of a question; but strikes you with immediate conviction; as it must needs do where it is not mingled, obscured or discoloured by passion and interest. I remember it was with extreme difficulty that I could bring my master to understand the meaning of the word opinion, or how a point could be disputable; because reason taught us to affirm or deny only where we are certain; and beyond our knowledge we cannot do either. So that controversies, wranglings, disputes, and positiveness in false or dubious propositions are evils unknown among the *Houyhnhnms*. In the like manner when I used to explain to him our several systems of natural philosophy,[†] he would laugh that a creature pretending to reason, should value itself upon the knowledge of other people's conjectures, and in things where that knowledge, if it were certain, could be of no use. Wherein he agreed entirely with the sentiments of Socrates,[‡] as Plato delivers them; which I mention as the highest honour I can do that prince of philosophers. I have often since reflected what destruction such a doctrine would make in the libraries of Europe, and how many paths to fame would be then shut up in the learned world.

natural philosophy scientific thought
Socrates (469–399 bc) Greek philosopher,
reported in Plato's Dialogues

Friendship and benevolence are the two principal virtues among the *Houyhnhnms*, and these not confined to particular objects, but universal to the whole race. For a stranger from the remotest part is equally treated with the nearest neighbour, and wherever he goes, looks upon himself as at home. They preserve decency and civility in the highest degrees, but are altogether ignorant of ceremony. They have no fondness[†] for their colts or foals, but the care they take in educating them proceeds entirely from the dictates of reason. And I observed my master to show the same affection to his neighbour's issue that he had for his own. They will have it that nature teaches them to love the whole species, and it is reason only that maketh a distinction of persons, where there is a superior degree of virtue.

When the matron *Houyhnhnms* have produced one of each sex, they no longer accompany with their consorts, except they lose one of their issue by some casualty, which very seldom happens: but in such a case they meet again. Or when the like accident befalls a person whose wife is past bearing, some other couple bestow him one of their own colts, and then go together again till the mother is pregnant. This caution is necessary to prevent the country from being overburdened with numbers. But the race of inferior *Houyhnhnms* bred up to be servants is not so strictly limited upon this article. These are allowed to produce three of each sex, to be domestics in the noble families.

In their marriages they are exactly careful to choose such colours as will not make any disagreeable mixture in the breed. Strength is chiefly valued in the male, and comeliness in the female, not upon the account of love, but to preserve the race from degenerating; for where a female happens to excel in strength, a consort is chosen with regard to comeliness. Courtship, love, presents, jointures,[‡] settlements, have no place in their thoughts; or terms whereby to express them in their language. The young couple meet and are joined, merely because it is the determination of their parents and friends: it is what they see done every day, and they look upon it as one of the necessary actions of a rational being. But the violation of marriage, or any other unchastity, was never heard of: and the married pair pass their lives with the same friendship and mutual benevolence that they bear to all others of the same species, who come in their way; without jealousy, fondness, quarrelling, or discontent.

In educating the youth of both sexes, their method is admirable, and highly deserves our imitation. These are not suffered to taste a grain of oats, except upon certain days, till eighteen years old; nor milk, but very rarely; and in summer they graze two hours in the morning, and as long in the evening, which their parents likewise observe, but the

fondness foolish indulgence

jointures property settled in marriage

150 servants are not allowed above half that time, and a great part of their grass is brought home which they eat at the most convenient hours, when they can be best spared from work.

155 Temperance, industry, exercise and cleanliness are the lessons equally enjoined to the young ones of both sexes; and my master thought it monstrous in us to give the females a different kind of education from the males, except in some articles of domestic management; whereby, as he truly observed, one half of our natives were good for nothing but bringing children into the world; and to trust the care of our children to such useless animals, he said, was yet a greater instance of brutality. . . .

[Return to Civilisation?][†]

The ship came within half a league of this creek, and sent out her longboat with vessels to take in fresh water (for the place it seems was very well known) but I did not observe it till the boat was almost on shore, and it was too late to seek another hiding-place. The seamen at their landing observed my canoe, and rummaging it all over, easily conjectured that the owner could not be far off. Four of them, well-armed, searched every cranny and lurking-hole, till at last they found me flat on my face behind the stone. They gazed a while in admiration at my strange uncouth dress, my coat made of skins, my wooden-soled shoes, and my furred stockings; from whence, however, they concluded I was not a native of the place, who all go naked. One of the seamen in Portuguese bid me rise, and asked who I was. I understood that language very well, and getting upon my feet, said, I was a poor *Yahoo*, banished from the *Houyhnhnms*, and desired they would please to let me depart. They admired to hear me answer them in their own tongue, and saw by my complexion I must be an European; but were at a loss to know what I meant by *Yahoos* and *Houyhnhnms*, and at the same time fell a laughing at my strange tone in speaking, which resembled the neighing of a horse. I trembled all the while betwixt fear and hatred: I again desired leave to depart, and was gently moving to my canoe; but they laid hold on me, desiring to know what country I was of? whence I came? with many other questions. I told them, I was born in England, from whence I came about five years ago, and then their country and ours were at peace. I therefore hoped they would not treat me as an enemy, since I meant them no harm, but was a poor *Yahoo*, seeking some desolate place where to pass the remainder of his unfortunate life. When they began to talk, I thought I never heard or saw anything so

[Return to Civilisation?] Despite adopting their values, Gulliver is expelled by the

houyhnhnms as a threat to society. He is horrified to see 'European Yahoos' approach

unnatural; for it appeared to me as monstrous as if a dog or a cow should speak in England, or a *Yahoo* in *Houyhnhnm-Land*. The honest Portuguese were equally amazed at my strange dress, and the odd manner of delivering my words, which however they understood very well. They spoke to me with great humanity, and said they were sure their captain would carry me gratis to Lisbon, from whence I might return to my own country; that two of the seamen would go back to the ship, inform the captain of what they had seen, and receive his orders; in the meantime, unless I would give my solemn oath not to fly, they would secure me by force. I thought it best to comply with their proposal. They were very curious to know my story, but I gave them very little satisfaction; and they all conjectured, that my misfortunes had impaired my reason. In two hours the boat, which went laden with vessels of water, returned with the captain's commands to fetch me on board. I fell on my knees to preserve my liberty; but all was in vain, and the men, having tied me with cords, heaved me into the boat, from whence I was taken into the ship and from thence into the captain's cabin.

His name was Pedro de Mendez, he was a very courteous and generous person; he entreated me to give some account of myself, and desired to know what I would eat or drink; said I should be used as well as himself, and spoke so many obliging things, that I wondered to find such civilities from a *Yahoo*. However, I remained silent and sullen; I was ready to faint at the very smell of him and his men. At last I desired something to eat out of my own canoe; but he ordered me a chicken and some excellent wine, and then directed that I should be put to bed in a very clean cabin. I would not undress myself, but lay on the bedclothes, and in half an hour stole out, when I thought the crew was at dinner, and getting to the side of the ship was going to leap into the sea, and swim for my life, rather than continue among *Yahoos*. But one of the seamen prevented me, and having informed the captain, I was chained to my cabin.

After dinner Don Pedro came to me, and desired to know my reason for so desperate an attempt; assured me he only meant to do me all the service he was able, and spoke so very movingly, that at last I descended to treat him like an animal which had some little portion of reason. I gave him a very short relation of my voyage, of the conspiracy against me by my own men, of the country where they set me on shore, and of my three years residence there. All which he looked upon as if it were a dream or a vision; whereat I took great offence; for I had quite forgot the faculty of lying, so peculiar to *Yahoos* in all countries where they preside, and consequently the disposition of suspecting truth in others of their own species. I asked him, whether it were the custom in his country to say *the thing that was not*? I assured him I had almost forgot

what he meant by falsehood, and if I had lived a thousand years in *Houyhnhm-Land*, I should never have heard a lie from the meanest servant; that I was altogether indifferent whether he believed me or no; but however, in return for his favours, I would give so much allowance to the corruption of his nature, as to answer any objection he would please to make, and then he might easily discover the truth.

The captain, a wise man, after many endeavours to catch me tripping in some part of my story, at last began to have a better opinion of my veracity, and the rather because he confessed, he met with a Dutch skipper, who pretended to have landed with five others of his crew upon a certain island or continent south of New Holland,[†] where they went for fresh water, and observed a horse driving before him several animals exactly resembling those I described under the name of *Yahoos*, with some other particulars, which the captain said he had forgot; because he then concluded them all to be lies. But he added, that since I professed so inviolable an attachment to truth, I must give him my word of honour to bear him company in this voyage without attempting anything against my life, or else he would continue me a prisoner till we arrived at Lisbon. I gave him the promise he required; but at the same time protested that I would suffer the greatest hardships rather than return to live among *Yahoos*.

Our voyage passed without any considerable accident. In gratitude to the captain I sometimes sat with him at his earnest request, and strove to conceal my antipathy to human kind, although it often broke out, which he suffered to pass without observation. But the greatest part of the day, I confined myself to my cabin, to avoid seeing any of the crew. The captain had often entreated me to strip myself of my savage dress, and offered to lend me the best suit of clothes he had. This I would not be prevailed on to accept, abhorring to cover myself with anything that had been on the back of a *Yahoo*. I only desired he would lend me two clean shirts, which having been washed since he wore them, I believed would not so much defile me. These I changed every second day, and washed them myself.

We arrived at Lisbon, Nov. 5. 1715. At our landing the captain forced me to cover myself with his cloak, to prevent the rabble from crowding about me. I was conveyed to his own house, and at my earnest request, he led me up to the highest room backwards.[†] I conjured him to conceal from all persons what I had told him of the *Houyhnhnms*, because the least hint of such a story would not only draw numbers of people to see me, but probably put me in danger of being imprisoned, or burnt by the Inquisition. The captain persuaded me to accept a suit of clothes newly made, but I would not suffer the tailor to take my

measure; however Don Pedro being almost of my size, they fitted me well enough. He accoutred me with other necessaries all new, which I aired for twenty-four hours before I would use them.

The captain had no wife, nor above three servants, none of which were suffered to attend at meals, and his whole deportment was so obliging, added to very good human understanding, that I really began to tolerate his company. He gained so far upon me, that I ventured to look out of the back window. By degrees I was brought into another room, from whence I peeped into the street, but drew my head back in a fright. In a week's time he seduced me down to the door. I found my terror gradually lessened, but my hatred and contempt seemed to increase. I was at last bold enough to walk the street in his company, but kept my nose well stopped with rue, or sometimes with tobacco.

In ten days Don Pedro, to whom I had given some account of my domestic affairs, put it upon me as a matter of honour and conscience, that I ought to return to my native country, and live at home with my wife and children. He told me there was an English ship in the port just ready to sail, and he would furnish me with all things necessary. It would be tedious to repeat his arguments and my contradictions. He said it was altogether impossible to find such a solitary island as I had desired to live in; but I might command in my own house, and pass my time in a manner as recluse as I pleased.

I complied at last, finding I could not do better. I left Lisbon the 24th day of November in an English merchant man, but who was the master I never enquired. Don Pedro accompanied me to the ship, and lent me twenty pounds. He took kind leave of me, and embraced me at parting, which I bore as well as I could. During the last voyage I had no commerce with the master or any of his men, but pretending I was sick kept close in my cabin. On the fifth of December 1715, we cast anchor in the Downs[†] about nine in the morning, and at three in the afternoon I got safe to my house at Rotherhithe.[†]

My wife and family received me with great surprise and joy, because they concluded me certainly dead; but I must freely confess the sight of them filled me only with hatred, disgust and contempt, and the more by reflecting on the near alliance I had to them. For, although since my unfortunate exile from the *Houyhnhm* country I had compelled myself to tolerate the sight of *Yahoos*, and to converse with Don Pedro de Mendez, yet my memory and imaginations were perpetually filled with the virtues and ideas of those exalted *Houyhnhnms*. And when I began to consider, that by copulating with one of the *Yahoo*-species I had become a parent of more, it struck me with the utmost shame, confusion and horror.

New Holland Australia

backwards at the back

Downs in English Channel

Rotherhithe East London dock area

As soon as I entered the house, my wife took me in her arms, and kissed me, at which, having not been used to the touch of that odious animal for so many years, I fell in a swoon for almost an hour. At the time I am writing it is five years since my last return to England: during the first year I could not endure my wife or children in my presence, the very smell of them was intolerable, much less could I suffer them to eat in the same room. To this hour they dare not presume to touch my bread, or drink out of the same cup, neither was I ever able to let one of them take me by the hand. The first money I laid out was to buy two young stone-horses[†] which I keep in a good stable, and next to them the groom is my greatest favourite; for I feel my spirits revived by the smell he contracts in the stable. My horses understand me tolerably well; I converse with them at least four hours every day. They are strangers to bridle or saddle, they live in great amity with me, and friendship to each other.

[*Gulliver's Doubts*]^{††}

I do in the next place complain of my own great want of judgment, in being prevailed upon by the entreaties and false reasonings of you and some others, very much against mine own opinion, to suffer my travels to be published. Pray bring to your mind how often I desired you to consider, when you insisted on the motive of public good, that the *Yahoos* were a species of animals utterly incapable of amendment by precepts or examples. And so it hath proved; for instead of seeing a full stop put to all abuses and corruptions, at least in this little island, as I had reason to expect: behold, after above six months warning, I cannot learn that my book hath produced one single effect according to mine intentions. I desired you would let me know by a letter, when party and faction were extinguished; judges learned and upright; pleaders[†] honest and modest, with some tincture of common sense; and Smithfield[†] blazing with pyramids of law books; the young nobility's education entirely changed; the physicians banished; the female *Yahoos* abounding in virtue, honour, truth and good sense; courts and levees[†] of great ministers thoroughly weeded and swept; wit, merit and learning rewarded; all disgracers of the press in prose and verse, condemned to eat nothing but their own cotton[†] and quench their thirst with their own ink. These, and a thousand other reformations, I firmly counted

stone-horses stallions
[*Gulliver's Doubts*] The 1735 edition has a
'Letter from Captain Gulliver to his Cousin',
about the publication of the original edition
pleaders barristers

Smithfield space where heretics had been
burned
levees morning receptions
cotton paper

upon by your encouragement; as indeed they were plainly deducible from the precepts delivered in my book. And, it must be owned, that seven months were a sufficient time to correct every vice and folly to which *Yahoos* are subject; if their natures had been capable of the least disposition to virtue or wisdom: yet so far have you been from answering mine expectation in any of your letters, that on the contrary, you are loading our carrier every week with libels, and keys, and reflections, and memoirs, and second parts; wherein I see myself accused of reflecting upon great statesfolk; of degrading human nature (for so they have still the confidence to style it) and of abusing the female sex. I find likewise, that the writers of those bundles are not agreed among themselves; for some of them will not allow me to be author of mine own travels; and others make me author of books to which I am wholly a stranger. . . .

1726, 1735

A MODEST PROPOSAL

FOR PREVENTING THE CHILDREN OF POOR PEOPLE FROM BEING A
BURDEN TO THEIR PARENTS OR THE COUNTRY, AND FOR
MAKING THEM BENEFICIAL TO THE PUBLIC.[†]

It is a melancholy object to those who walk through this great town,[†] or travel in the country, when they see the streets, the roads, and cabin-doors crowded with beggars of the female sex, followed by three, four, or six children, all in rags, and importuning every passenger for an alms. These mothers, instead of being able to work for their honest livelihood, are forced to employ all their time in strolling[†] to beg sustenance for their helpless infants who, as they grow up, either turn thieves for want of work, or leave their dear Native Country to fight for the Pretender[†] in Spain, or sell themselves to the Barbadoes.[†]

A *Modest Proposal* Ironically using the voice of a naive, humane, economic calculator, who accepts people as 'the wealth of the nation', Swift explores the moral and practical problems underlying the plight of Ireland; the argument is not merely anti-colonialist: the degeneracy of the natives, the callousness of the higher orders, and the complacency of the reader all come under fire

great town Dublin; 'this kingdom' is Ireland alone
strolling wandering without fixed homes
Pretender James Stuart, son of James II, was supported by France and Spain in his claim to the British throne
Barbadoes West Indian colonies

10 I think it is agreed by all parties that this prodigious number of children, in the arms, or on the backs, or at the heels of their mothers, and frequently of their fathers, is in the present deplorable state of the kingdom, a very great additional grievance; and therefore whoever could find out a fair, cheap and easy method of making these children
15 sound useful members of the commonwealth would deserve so well of the public, as to have his statue set up for a preserver of the nation.

But my intention is very far from being confined to provide only for the children of professed beggars, it is of a much greater extent, and shall take in the whole number of infants at a certain age, who are born
20 of parents in effect as little able to support them as those who demand our charity in the streets.

As to my own part, having turned my thoughts for many years upon this important subject, and maturely weighed the several schemes of other projectors,[†] I have always found them grossly mistaken in their computation. It is true a child just dropped from its dam may be supported by her milk for a solar year with little other nourishment, at
25 most not above the value of two shillings, which the mother may certainly get, or the value in scraps, by her lawful occupation of begging. And it is exactly at one year old that I propose to provide for them in such a manner as, instead of being a charge upon their parents, or the parish, or wanting food and raiment for the rest of their lives, they
30 shall, on the contrary, contribute to the feeding and partly to the clothing of many thousands.

There is likewise another great advantage in my scheme, that it will prevent those voluntary abortions, and that horrid practice of women murdering their bastard children, alas! too frequent among us, sacrificing the poor innocent babes, I doubt, more to avoid the expense than the
35 shame, which would move tears and pity in the most savage and inhuman breast.

The number of souls in this kingdom being usually reckoned one million and a half, of these I calculate there may be about two hundred thousand couple whose wives are breeders, from which number I subtract thirty thousand couples who are able to maintain their own children, although I apprehend there cannot be so many under the
45 present distresses of the kingdom, but this being granted, there will remain an hundred and seventy thousand breeders. I again subtract fifty thousand for those women who miscarry, or whose children die by accident, or disease within the year. There only remain an hundred and twenty thousand children of poor parents annually born. The question therefore is, how this number shall be reared and provided for, which,
50

projectors devisers of schemes, often financial or scientific

as I have already said, under the present situation of affairs is utterly impossible by all the methods hitherto proposed: for we can neither employ them in handicraft, or agriculture; we neither build houses (I mean in the country) nor cultivate land; they can very seldom pick up a livelihood by stealing till they arrive at six years old, except where they are of towardly parts, although I confess they learn the rudiments much earlier, during which time they can however be properly looked upon only as probationers, as I have been informed by a principal gentleman in the County of Cavan, who protested to me that he never knew above one or two instances under the age of six, even in a part of the kingdom so renowned for the quickest proficiency in that art.

I am assured by our merchants that a boy or a girl, before twelve years old, is no saleable commodity, and even when they come to this age, they will not yield above three pounds, or three pounds and half-a-crown at most on the Exchange, which cannot turn to account either to the parents or the kingdom, the charge of nutriment and rags having been at least four times that value.

I shall now therefore humbly propose my own thoughts, which I hope will not be liable to the least objection.

I have been assured by a very knowing American of my acquaintance in London, that a young healthy child, well nursed, is at a year old a most delicious, nourishing, and wholesome food, whether stewed, roasted, baked, or boiled, and I make no doubt that it will equally serve in a fricassee, or a ragout.[†]

I do therefore humbly offer it to public consideration, that of the hundred and twenty thousand children, already computed, twenty thousand may be reserved for breed, whereof only one fourth part to be males, which is more than we allow to sheep, black-cattle, or swine; and my reason is that these children are seldom the fruits of marriage, a circumstance not much regarded by our savages; therefore one male will be sufficient to serve four females. That the remaining hundred thousand may at a year old be offered in sale to the persons of quality and fortune, through the kingdom, always advising the mother to let them suck plentifully of the last month, so as to render them plump and fat for a good table. A child will make two dishes at an entertainment for friends, and when the family dines alone the fore or hind quarter will make a reasonable dish, and seasoned with a little pepper or salt will be very good boiled on the fourth day, especially in winter.

I have reckoned upon a medium,[†] that a child just born will weigh 12 pounds, and in a solar year if tolerably nursed increaseth to 28 pounds.

ragout stew

upon a medium on average

I grant this food will be somewhat dear, and therefore very proper for landlords, who, as they have already devoured most of the parents, seem to have the best title to the children.

95 Infants' flesh will be in season throughout the year, but more plentiful in March, and a little before and after, for we are told by a grave author,[†] an eminent French physician, that fish being a prolific diet, there are more children born in Roman Catholic countries about nine months after Lent, than at any other season; therefore reckoning a year after Lent,[‡] the markets will be more glutted than usual, because the number of Popish infants is at least three to one in this kingdom, and therefore it will have one other collateral advantage by lessening the number of Papists among us.

100 I have already computed the charge of nursing a beggar's child (in which list I reckon all cottagers, labourers, and four fifths of the farmers) to be about two shillings per annum, rags included, and I believe no gentleman would repine to give ten shillings for the carcass of a good fat child, which, as I have said, will make four dishes of excellent nutritive meat, when he hath only some particular friend, or his own family to dine with him. Thus the Squire will learn to be a good landlord, and grow popular among his tenants, the mother will have eight shillings net profit, and be fit for work till she produces another child.

105 Those who are more thrifty (as I must confess the times require) may flay the carcass; the skin of which, artificially[†] dressed, will make admirable gloves for ladies, and summer boots for fine gentlemen.

110 As to our City of Dublin, shambles[†] may be appointed for this purpose in the most convenient parts of it, and butchers we may be assured will not be wanting, although I rather recommend buying the children alive, and dressing them hot from the knife, as we do roasting pigs.

115 A very worthy person, a true lover of his country, and whose virtues I highly esteem, was lately pleased in discoursing on this matter, to offer a refinement upon my scheme. He said that many gentlemen of this kingdom having of late destroyed their deer, he conceived that the want of venison might be well supplied by the bodies of young lads and maidens not exceeding fourteen years of age, nor under twelve, so great a number of both sexes in every country being now ready to starve for want of work and service; and these to be disposed of by their parents if alive, or otherwise by their nearest relations. But with due deference to so excellent a friend and so deserving a patriot, I

grave author François Rabelais (c. 1494–1553), a comic influence on Swift
Lent the penitential season before Easter

artificially done skillfully
shambles slaughter-houses

135 cannot be altogether in his sentiments; for as to the males, my American acquaintance assured me from frequent experience that their flesh was generally tough and lean, like that of our schoolboys, by continual exercise, and their taste disagreeable, and to fatten them would not answer the charge. Then as to the females, it would, I think with humble submission, be a loss to the public, because they soon would become breeders themselves. And besides, it is not improbable that some scrupulous people might be apt to censure such a practice (although indeed very unjustly) as a little bordering upon cruelty, which, I confess, hath always been with me the strongest objection against any project, however so well intended.

140 But in order to justify my friend, he confessed that this expedient was put into his head by the famous Psalmanazar,[†] a native of the island Formosa, who came from thence to London above twenty years ago, and in conversation told my friend that in his country when any young person happened to be put to death, the executioner sold the carcass to persons of quality, as a prime dainty, and that in his time, the body of a plump girl of fifteen, who was crucified for an attempt to poison the emperor, was sold to his Imperial Majesty's Prime Minister of State, and other great mandarins of the Court, in joints from the gibbet, at four hundred crowns. Neither indeed can I deny, that if the same use were made of several plump young girls in this town, who, without one single groat to their fortunes, cannot stir abroad without a chair, and appear at the playhouse and assemblies in foreign fineries which they never will pay for, the kingdom would not be the worse.

150 Some persons of a desponding spirit are in great concern about that vast number of poor people who are aged, diseased, or maimed, and I have been desired to employ my thoughts what course may be taken to ease the nation of so grievous an encumbrance. But I am not in the least pain upon that matter because it is very well known that they are every day dying, and rotting, by cold and famine, and filth, and vermin, as fast as can be reasonably expected. And as to the younger labourers, they are now in almost as hopeful a condition. They cannot get work, and consequently pine away for want of nourishment, to a degree that if at any time they are accidentally hired to common labour, they have not strength to perform it; and thus the country and themselves are happily delivered from the evils to come.

155 I have too long digressed, and therefore shall return to my subject. I think the advantages by the proposal which I have made are obvious and many, as well as of the highest importance.

Psalmanazar George Psalmanazar, a Frenchman, published a fraudulent account of Formosa (1704)

For first, as I have already observed, it would greatly lessen the number of Papists, with whom we are yearly over-run, being the principal breeders of the nation as well as our most dangerous enemies, and who stay at home on purpose with a design to deliver the kingdom to the Pretender, hoping to take their advantage by the absence of so many good Protestants,[†] who have chosen rather to leave their country than stay at home and pay tithes against their conscience to an Episcopal curate.

Secondly, the poorer tenants will have something valuable of their own, which by law may be made liable to distress,[†] and help to pay their landlord's rent, their corn and cattle being already seized and money a thing unknown.

Thirdly, whereas the maintenance of an hundred thousand children, from two years old and upwards, cannot be computed at less than ten shillings a piece per annum, the nation's stock will be thereby increased fifty thousand pounds per annum, besides the profit of a new dish introduced to the tables of all gentlemen of fortune in the kingdom who have any refinement in taste; and the money will circulate among ourselves, the goods being entirely of our own growth and manufacture.

Fourthly, the constant breeders, besides the gain of eight shillings sterling per annum by the sale of their children, will be rid of the charge of maintaining them after the first year.

Fifthly, this food would likewise bring great custom to taverns, where the vintners will certainly be so prudent as to procure the best receipts for dressing it to perfection, and consequently have their houses frequented by all the fine gentlemen, who justly value themselves upon their knowledge in good eating; and a skilful cook, who understands how to oblige his guests, will contrive to make it as expensive as they please.

Sixthly, this would be a great inducement to marriage, which all wise nations have either encouraged by rewards, or enforced by laws and penalties. It would increase the care and tenderness of mothers toward their children, when they were sure of a settlement for life to the poor babes, provided in some sort by the public to their annual profit instead of expense. We should see an honest emulation among the married women, which of them could bring the fattest child to the market. Men would become as fond of their wives, during the time of their pregnancy, as they are now of their mares in foal, their cows in calf, or sows when they are ready to farrow; nor offer to beat or kick them (as it is too frequent a practice) for fear of a miscarriage.

Protestants here, dissenters, who resented paying taxes to the established Episcopal church

distress legal seizure

Many other advantages might be enumerated. For instance, the addition of some thousand carcasses in our exportation of barrelled beef; the propagation of swine's flesh and improvement in the art of making good bacon, so much wanted among us by the great destruction of pigs, too frequent at our tables, which are no way comparable in taste, or magnificence to a well-grown, fat yearling child, which roasted whole will make a considerable figure at a Lord Mayor's feast, or any other public entertainment. But this and many others I omit, being studious of brevity.

Supposing that one thousand families in this city would be constant customers for infants' flesh, besides others who might have it at merry-meetings, particularly weddings and christenings, I compute that Dublin would take off annually about twenty thousand carcasses, and the rest of the kingdom (where probably they will be sold somewhat cheaper) the remaining eighty thousand.

I can think of no one objection that will possibly be raised against this proposal, unless it should be urged that the number of people will be thereby much lessened in the kingdom. This I freely own, and it was indeed one principal design in offering it to the world. I desire the reader will observe, that I calculate my remedy for this one individual Kingdom of Ireland, and for no other that ever was, is, or, I think, ever can be upon earth. Therefore let no man talk to me of other expedients;[†] of taxing our absentees[†] at five shillings a pound; of using neither clothes, nor household furniture, except what is of our own growth and manufacture; of utterly rejecting the materials and instruments that promote foreign luxury; of curing the expensiveness of pride, vanity, idleness, and gaming in our women; of introducing a vein of parsimony, prudence and temperance; of learning to love our Country, wherein we differ even from Laplanders, and the inhabitants of Topinamboo;[†] of quitting our animosities and factions, nor act any longer like the Jews, who were murdering one another at the very moment their city[†] was taken; of being a little cautious not to sell our country and consciences for nothing; of teaching landlords to have at least one degree of mercy toward their tenants; lastly of putting a spirit of honesty, industry and skill into our shopkeepers, who, if a resolution could now be taken to buy only our native goods, would immediately unite to cheat and exact upon us in the price, the measure, and the goodness, nor could ever yet be brought to make one fair proposal of just dealing, though often and earnestly invited to it.

Therefore I repeat, let no man talk to me of these and the like

other expedients all seriously proposed elsewhere by Swift
absentees landlords and officials who remained in England

Topinamboo savage region of Brazil city the Emperor Titus captured Jerusalem in AD 70, during civil strife

expedients, till he hath at least some glimpse of hope that there will ever be some hearty and sincere attempt to put them in practice.

255 But as to myself, having been wearied out for many years with offering vain, idle, visionary thoughts, and at length utterly despairing of success, I fortunately fell upon this proposal, which as it is wholly new, so it hath something solid and real, of no expense and little trouble, full in our own power, and whereby we can incur no danger in disobliging England. For this kind of commodity will not bear exportation, the flesh being of too tender a consistence to admit a long continuance in salt, although perhaps I could name a country which would be glad to eat up our whole nation without it.

After all, I am not so violently bent upon my own opinion as to reject any offer proposed by wise men, which shall be found equally innocent, cheap, easy and effectual. But before something of that kind shall be advanced in contradiction to my scheme, and offering a better, I desire the author, or authors, will be pleased maturely to consider two points. First, as things now stand, how they will be able to find food and raiment for an hundred thousand useless mouths and backs. And secondly, there being a round million of creatures in human figure throughout this kingdom, whose whole subsistence put into a common stock would leave them in debt two millions of pounds sterling, adding those who are beggars by profession, to the bulk of farmers, cottagers and labourers with their wives and children, who are beggars in effect; I desire those politicians who dislike my overture and may perhaps be so bold to attempt an answer, that they will first ask the parents of these mortals, whether they would not at this day think it a great happiness to have been sold for food at a year old, in the manner I prescribe; and thereby have avoided such a perpetual scene of misfortunes as they have since gone through, by the oppression of landlords, the impossibility of paying rent without money or trade, the want of common sustenance, with neither house nor clothes to cover them from the inclemencies of the weather, and the most inevitable prospect of entailing the like, or greater miseries upon their breed for ever.

285 I profess in the sincerity of my heart that I have not the least personal interest in endeavouring to promote this necessary work, having no other motive than the public good of my country, by advancing our trade, providing for infants, relieving the poor, and giving some pleasure to the rich. I have no children, by which I can propose to get a single penny; the youngest being nine years old, and my wife past child-bearing.

1729

1729

A BEAUTIFUL YOUNG NYMPH GOING TO BED[†]

Written for the Honour of the Fair Sex

Pars minima est ipsa Puella sui. Ovid
[The actual girl is the smallest part of herself]

Corinna, pride of Drury Lane,[†]
For whom no shepherd sighs in vain;
Never did Covent Garden boast
So bright a battered, strolling toast!
5 No drunken rake to pick her up,
No cellar where on tick to sup;
Returning at the midnight hour,
Four stories climbing to her bower;
Then, seated on a three-legged chair,
10 Takes off her artificial hair;
Now picking out a crystal eye,
She wipes it clean, and lays it by.
Her eyebrows from a mouse's hide,
Stuck on with art on either side,
15 Pulls off with care, and first displays 'em,
Then in a play-book smoothly lays 'em,
Now dexterously her plumpers draws,
That serve to fill her hollow jaws,
Untwists a wire, and from her gums
20 A set of teeth completely comes;
Pulls out the rags contrived to prop
Her flabby dug, and down they drop.
Proceeding on, the lovely goddess
Unlaces next her steel-ribbed bodice,
25 Which, by the operator's skill,
Press down the lumps, the hollows fill.
Up goes her hand, and off she slips
The bolsters that supply her hips;
With gentlest touch, she next explores

A Beautiful Young Nymph Going to Bed The images by showing the 'reality' of the prostitute
Roman poet Ovid had celebrated in *Amores* *Drury Lane* with Covent Garden, an area of L5 the modesty and naked perfection of his mistresses and brothels
mistress Corinna. Swift deflates romantic

- 30 Her chancres,[†] issues, running sores,
Effects of many a sad disaster;
And then to each applies a plaster:
But must, before she goes to bed,
Rub off the daubs of white and red,
And smooth the furrows in her front
35 With greasy paper stuck upon't.
She takes a *bolus*[†] ere she sleeps,
And then between two blankets creeps.
With pains of love tormented lies;
40 Or, if she chance to close her eyes,
Of Bridewell and the Compter[†] dreams,
And feels the lash, and faintly screams;
Or, by a faithless bully drawn,
At some hedge-tavern lies in pawn;
45 Or to Jamaica seems transported,
Alone, and by no planter courted;
Or, near Fleet-ditch's[†] oozy brinks,
Surrounded with a hundred stinks;
Belated, seems on watch to lie,
50 And snap some cully* passing by;
Or, struck with fear, her fancy runs
On watchmen, constables and duns,
From whom she meets with frequent rubs;
But never from religious clubs;[†]
55 Whose favour she is sure to find
Because she pays 'em all in kind.
Corinna wakes. A dreadful sight!
Behold the ruins of the night!
A wicked rat her plaster stole,
60 Half eat, and dragged it to his hole.
The crystal eye, alas, was missed;
And puss had on her plumpers p—ssed,
A pigeon picked her issue-peas:[†]
And Shock* her tresses filled with fleas.
65 The nymph, though in this mangled plight,
Must every morn her limbs unite.
But how shall I describe her arts
To re-collect the scattered parts?
Or show the anguish, toil, and pain,

chancres ulcers from venereal disease
bolus large pill
Bridewell . . . Compter both prisons
Fleet-ditch an open sewer

clubs moral vigilantes (seen as hypocrites)
issue-peas peas keeping open discharging
sores

- 70 Of gathering up herself again?
The bashful Muse will never bear
In such a scene to interfere.
Corinna, in the morning dizen[†],
Who sees, will spew; who smells, be poisoned.
1731 1734

From VERSES ON THE DEATH OF DR SWIFT, D.S.P.D.

Occasioned by reading a Maxim in Rochefoucault[†]

- As Rochefoucault his maxims drew
From nature, I believe 'em true:
They argue no corrupted mind
In him; the fault is in mankind.
5 This maxim more than all the rest
Is thought too base for human breast:
'In all distresses of our friends
We first consult our private ends,
While nature, kindly bent to ease us,
10 Points out some circumstance to please us.'
If this perhaps your patience move,
Let reason and experience prove. . . .
Vain human kind! fantastic race!
40 Thy various follies, who can trace?
Self-love, ambition, envy, pride,
Their empire in our hearts divide:
Give others riches, power, and station,
'Tis all on me an usurpation.
45 I have no title to aspire;
Yet when you sink, I seem the higher.
In Pope, I cannot read a line
But with a sigh, I wish it mine:

dizen gaudily dressed

Verses on the Death of Dr Swift Written some fourteen years before Swift's actual death, this poem combines genial knowledge of self and the world with a defence of his public and satiric roles. It shows his mastery of the eight-syllable line. Swift found congenial the cynicism of the French moralist, François de la Rochefoucauld (1613–18). The 'Maxim' is paraphrased in 11.7–10

fool

dog

- When he can in one couplet fix
 50 More sense, than I can do in six,
 It gives me such a jealous fit,
 I cry, 'pox take him and his wit.'
 I grieve to be outdone by Gay
 In my own humorous, biting way.
 55 Arbuthnot is no more my friend,
 Who dares to irony pretend;
 Which I was born to introduce,
 Refined it first, and showed its use.
 St John, as well as Pulteney,[†] knows
 60 That I had some repute for prose;
 And, till they drove me out of date,
 Could maul a minister of state.
 If they have mortified my pride.
 And made me throw my pen aside,
 65 If with such talents Heav'n hath blest 'em,
 Have I not reason to detest 'em?
 To all my foes, dear Fortune, send
 Thy gifts, but never to my friend:
 I tamely can endure the first,
 70 But, this with envy makes me burst.
 Thus much may serve by way of proem;
 Proceed we therefore to our poem.
 The time is not remote, when I
 Must by the course of nature die:
 75 When I foresee, my special friends
 Will try to find their private ends.
 And though 'tis hardly understood
 Which way my death can do them good,
 Yet thus, methinks, I hear 'em speak:
 80 'See, how the Dean begins to break!
 Poor gentleman, he droops apace,
 You plainly find it in his face:
 That old vertigo[†] in his head
 Will never leave him, till he's dead:
 85 Besides, his memory decays,
 He recollects not what he says;
 He cannot call his friends to mind;
 Forgets the place where last he dined:

St John . . . Pulteney Viscount Bolingbroke
 (see 1.366 n.), with William Pulteney, wrote
 in a periodical *The Craftsman* against Sir
 Robert Walpole, already Swift's victim

vertigo (stress on second syllable) probably
 Mènière's disease, causing dizziness

- Plies you with stories o'er and o'er,
 90 He told them fifty times before.
 How does he fancy, we can sit
 To hear his out-of-fashioned wit?
 But he takes up with younger folks,
 Who, for his wine, will bear his jokes.
 95 Faith, he must make his stories shorter,
 Or change his comrades once a quarter.
 In half the time, he talks them round;
 There must another set be found.
 'For poetry, he's past his prime,
 100 He takes an hour to find a rhyme:
 His fire is out, his wit decayed,
 His fancy sunk, his muse a jade.
 I'd have him throw away his pen;
 But there's no talking to some men.'
 105 And then, their tenderness appears
 By adding largely to my years:
 'He's older than he would be reckoned,
 And well remembers Charles the Second.
 'He hardly drinks a pint of wine;
 110 And that, I doubt, is no good sign.
 His stomach too begins to fail:
 Last year we thought him strong and hale,
 But now, he's quite another thing;
 I wish he may hold out till spring.'
 115 Then hug themselves, and reason thus:
 'It is not yet so bad with us'. . .
 Behold the fatal day arrive!
 'How is the Dean?' — 'He's just alive.'
 Now the departing prayer is read.
 150 He hardly breathes. The Dean is dead.
 Before the passing-bell[†] begun,
 The news through half the town has run.
 'O, may we all for death prepare!
 What has he left? And who's his heir?
 155 I know no more than what the news is,
 'Tis all bequeathed to public uses.
 To public uses! There's a whim!
 What had the public done for him?
 Mere envy, avarice, and pride!
 160 He gave it all — but first he died.

passing-bell tolled immediately after death

And had the Dean, in all the nation,
No worthy friend, no poor relation?
So ready to do strangers good,
Forgetting his own flesh and blood?' . . .

From Dublin soon to London spread,
'Tis told at Court, the Dean is dead.

180 And Lady Suffolk¹ in the spleen
Runs laughing up to tell the Queen.

The Queen so gracious, mild, and good,
Cries, 'Is he gone? 'Tis time he should.
He's dead you say? Why, let him rot;
I'm glad the medals were forgot.

185 I promised him, I own, but when?
I only was the Princess then;
But now as consort of a king,
You know 'tis quite a different thing.' . . .

205 Here shift the scene, to represent
How those I love, my death lament.
Poor Pope will grieve a month; and Gay
A week, and Arbuthnot a day.

St John himself will scarce forbear
To bite his pen, and drop a tear.
The rest will give a shrug, and cry
'I'm sorry; but we all must die!' . . .

225 My female friends, whose tender hearts
Have better learned to act their parts,
Receive the news in doleful dumps,*
The Dean is dead, (pray what is trumps?)

230 Then Lord have mercy on his soul.
(Ladies, I'll venture for the vole.)
Six deans, they say, must bear the pall.[†]
(I wish I knew what king to call.)

'Madam, your husband will attend
The funeral of so good a friend.'
235 'No, madam, 'tis a shocking sight,
And he's engaged tomorrow night!
My Lady Club would take it ill,
If he should fail her at quadrille.

He loved the Dean – (I lead a heart)
240 But dearest friends, they say, must part.

Lady Suffolk Mistress of George II, and friend of Swift. Queen Caroline, when Princess of Wales, had promised him some medals

pall coffin-cloth; the ladies are playing the card game of quadrille, in which the *vole* is a bold bid

His time was come, he ran his race;
We hope he's in a better place.'

Why do we grieve that friends should die?
No loss more easy to supply.

245 One year is past; a different scene;
No further mention of the Dean;
Who now, alas, no more is missed
Than if he never did exist.

Where's now the favourite of Apollo?[†]
250 Departed; and his works must follow: . . .

300 Suppose me dead; and then suppose
A club assembled at the Rose:[†]
Where, from discourse of this and that,
I grow the subject of their chat:

And while they toss my name about,
With favour some, and some without –
305 One quite indifferent in the cause,
My character impartial draws:

'The Dean, if we believe report,
Was never ill received at Court.
As for his Works in Verse or Prose,
310 I own myself no judge of those:

Nor can I tell what critics thought 'em;
But this I know, all people bought 'em,
As with a moral view designed
To cure the vices of mankind.

315 Although ironically grave,
He shamed the fool, and lashed the knave.
To steal a hint was never known,
But what he writ, was all his own.

'He never thought an honour done him
320 Because a peer was proud to own* him:
Would rather slip aside, and choose
To talk with wits in dirty shoes:

And scorn the fools with Stars and Garters,[†]
So often seen caressing Chartres.[†]
325 He never courted men in station,
Nor persons had in admiration;
Of no man's greatness was afraid,
Because he sought for no man's aid.

acknowledge

Apollo the Rose god of poetry
a tavern (clubs often met in such places)

Garters indicates the highest British order of knighthood
Chartres usurer and rapist

330 Though trusted long in great affairs,
 He gave himself no haughty airs:
 Without regarding private ends,
 Spent all his credit for his friends:
 And only chose the wise and good,
 No flatterers, no allies in blood;
 335 But succoured virtue in distress,
 And seldom failed of good success;
 As sundown in their hearts must own,
 Who, but for him, had been unknown.
 'He kept with princes due decorum,
 340 Yet never stood in awe before 'em:
 He followed David's lesson[†] just,
 In princes never put his trust.
 And, would you make him truly sour,
 Provoke him with a slave in power:
 345 The Irish Senate if you named,
 With what impatience he declaimed!
 Fair LIBERTY was all his cry;
 For her he stood prepared to die;
 For her he boldly stood alone;
 350 For her he oft exposed his own.
 Two kingdoms,[†] just as faction led,
 Had set a price upon his head;
 But not a traitor could be found,
 To sell him for six hundred pound.
 355 'Had he but spared his tongue and pen,
 He might have rose like other men:
 But, power was never in his thought,
 And wealth he valued not a groat.
 Ingratitude he often found,
 360 And pitied those who meant the wound:
 But kept the tenor of his mind,
 To merit well of human kind;
 Nor made a sacrifice of those
 Who still were true, to please his foes.
 365 He laboured many a fruitless hour
 To reconcile his friends[†] in power;

David's lesson in Psalm 146.3
two kingdoms in 1714, the government in London offered £300 for information of the author of *The Public Spirit of the Whigs*; in 1724, the Irish government offered £300
 after 'the Drapier's' *Letter to the Whole People*
his friends the Tory leaders, St John, Viscount Bolingbroke; Harley, Earl of Oxford; Butler, Duke of Ormonde

370 Saw mischief by a faction brewing,
 While they pursued each other's ruin.
 But, finding vain was all his care,
 He left the court in mere despair.
 'And, O! how short are human schemes!
 Here ended all our golden dreams.
 What St John's skill in state affairs,
 What Ormonde's valour, Oxford's cares,
 375 To save their sinking country lent,
 Was all destroyed by one event.
 Too soon that precious life was ended,
 On which alone, our weal depended.
 When up a dangerous faction[†] starts,
 380 With wrath and vengeance in their hearts;
 By solemn League and Covenant[†] bound,
 To ruin, slaughter, and confound;
 To turn religion to a fable,
 And make the Government a Babel: *
 385 Pervert the law, disgrace the gown,
 Corrupt the senate, rob the crown;
 To sacrifice old England's glory,
 And make her infamous in story.
 When such a tempest shook the land,
 390 How could unguarded virtue stand?
 'With horror, grief, despair, the Dean
 Beheld the dire destructive scene:
 His friends in exile,[†] or the Tower,[†]
 Himself within the frown of power;
 395 Pursued by base envenomed pens,
 Far to the land of slaves[†] and fens;
 A servile race in folly nursed,
 Who truckle most, when treated worst. . . .
 'The Dean did by his pen defeat
 An infamous destructive cheat;[†]
 Taught fools their interest how to know;
 410 And gave them arms to ward the blow.

confusion

faction The death of Queen Anne in 1714 (1.376) let in the Whig *faction*, allegedly hostile to traditional order
land of slaves Ireland, where Ormonde had got him the Deanery of St Patrick's
cheat the attempt to impose Wood's debased coinage in Ireland, attacked in his *Drapier's Letters*
Covenant suggests Presbyterianism
in exile Bolingbroke; Oxford was imprisoned in the Tower of London

Envy hath owned it was his doing,
To save that helpless land from ruin;
While they who at the steerage stood
And reaped the profit, sought his blood. . .

425 But Heaven his innocence defends,
The grateful people stand his friends:
Not strains of law, nor judge's frown,
Nor topics brought to please the crown,
Nor witness hired, nor jury picked,
430 Prevail to bring him in convict.
'In exile with a steady heart,
He spent his life's declining part;
Where folly, pride, and faction sway,
Remote from St John, Pope, and Gay. . .

455 'Perhaps I may allow, the Dean
Had too much satire in his vein,
And seemed determined not to starve it,
Because no age could more deserve it.

Yet, malice never was his aim;
460 He lashed the vice, but spared the name.[†]
No individual could resent
Where thousands equally were meant.
His satire points at no defect,
But what all mortals may correct;

465 For he abhorred that senseless tribe
Who call it humour when they jibe:
He spared a hump, or crooked nose,
Whose owners set not up for beaux,
True genuine dullness moved his pity,
Unless it offered to be witty.

Those who their ignorance confessed
He ne'er offended with a jest;
But laughed to hear an idiot quote
A verse from Horace, learned by rote.

475 'He knew an hundred pleasant stories,
With all the turns of Whigs and Tories:
Was cheerful to his dying day,
And* friends would let him have his way.
'He gave the little wealth he had,

spared the name despite occasional personal
hits, his satire is more general than Dryden's
or Pope's

480 To build a house[†] for fools and mad:
To show, by one satiric touch,
No nation wanted it so much:
That kingdom he hath left his debtor,
I wish it soon may have a better.'

1731 1739

a house St Patrick's Hospital for the mentally
ill opened in 1757

William Congreve

1670–1729

Born in Yorkshire, Congreve went to school in Kilkenney and to Trinity College, Dublin, beside Swift. After a brief period studying law in London, he turned to writing: a novel *Incognita* appeared in 1691. His fame was achieved with four comedies: *The Old Bachelor* (1693); *The Double Dealer* (1694); *Love for Love* (1695); *The Way of the World* (1700). To his mastery of the Restoration comedy of manners, with its wit and sexual intrigue, he added a delicacy of investigating the underlying emotions; the plays are regularly revived. Johnson praised the poetry of his tragedy *The Mourning Bride* (1697). In the second half of his life, he wrote little, holding official posts and moving in fashionable and literary circles.

In the complex plot of *The Way of the World*, Mirabell, a former rake, loves Millamant, but has pretended to love her aunt, Lady Wishfort, who controls half her fortune. To prevent Lady Wishfort's revenge, he hopes to trap her in a false marriage to his servant, impersonating Mirabell's uncle, Sir Rowland. The aunt's daughter, Mrs Fainall, is Mirabell's former mistress; Sir Wilfull Witwoud, Lady Wishfort's rustic nephew; Foible, her servant. (Fainall and Mrs Marwood, hostile to the lovers, do not appear in the extract.) The scene contrasts motivation, self-awareness, and sophistication of behaviour, wittily dramatising the serious issue of survival in a highly-mannered society (where the names suggest character or situation). The plot ends happily for the lovers.

From THE WAY OF THE WORLD

From Act IV, Scene i [*Marriage Conditions*]

Lady Wishfort's house

Enter LADY WISHFORT and FOIBLE

LADY WISHFORT

Is Sir Rowland coming, sayest thou, Foible? And are things in order?

FOIBLE

Yes madam. I have put wax lights in the sconces, and placed the

footmen in a row in the hall in their best liveries, with the coachman and postilion to fill up the equipage.[†]

LADY WISHFORT

5 Have you pulvilled[†] the coachman and postilion, that they may not stink of the stable when Sir Rowland comes by?

FOIBLE

Yes madam.

LADY WISHFORT

And are the dancers and the music ready, that he may be entertained in all points with correspondence to his passion?

FOIBLE

10 All is ready, madam.

LADY WISHFORT

And – well – and how do I look, Foible?

FOIBLE

Most killing well, madam.

LADY WISHFORT

Well, and how shall I receive him? In what figure shall I give his heart the first impression? There is a great deal in the first impression. Shall I sit? No, I won't sit, I'll walk. Ay, I'll walk from the door upon his entrance, and then turn full upon him. No, that will be too sudden. I'll lie, ay, I'll lie down. I'll receive him in my little dressing-room, there's a couch – yes, yes, I'll give the first impression on a couch. I won't lie neither, but loll and lean upon one elbow, with one foot a little dangling off, jogging in a thoughtful way. Yes; and then as soon as he appears, start, ay, start and be surprised, and rise to meet him in a pretty disorder. Yes. Oh, nothing is more alluring than a levee[†] from a couch in some confusion; it shows the foot to advantage and furnishes with blushes and recomposing airs beyond comparison. Hark! There's a coach.

FOIBLE

'Tis he, madam.

LADY WISHFORT

Oh dear, has my nephew made his addresses to Millamant? I ordered him.

FOIBLE

Sir Wilfull is set in to drinking, madam, in the parlour.

LADY WISHFORT

30 Ods my life I'll send him to her. Call her down, Foible, bring her hither. I'll send him as I go. When they are together, then come to me Foible, that I may not be too long alone with Sir Rowland. *Exit*

equipage suite of servants
pulvilled perfumed with powder

levee rising, often royal

Enter MRS¹ MILLAMANT and MRS FAINALL

FOIBLE

Madam, I stayed here to tell your ladyship that Mr Mirabell has waited this half hour for an opportunity to talk with you, though my lady's orders were to leave you and Sir Wilfull together. Shall I tell Mr Mirabell that you are at leisure?

MILLAMANT

No. What would the dear man have? I am thoughtful and would amuse myself; bid him come another time.

'There never yet was woman made

Nor shall, but to be cursed.' (*repeating and walking about*)

That's hard.

MRS FAINALL

You are very fond of Sir John Suckling¹ today, Millamant, and the poets.

MILLAMANT

He? Ay, and filthy verses; so I am.

FOIBLE

Sir Wilfull is coming madam; shall I send Mr Mirabell away?

MILLAMANT

Ay, if you please Foible, send him away – or send him hither – just as you will dear Foible. I think I'll see him – shall I? Ay, let the wretch come.

[Exit FOIBLE]

'Thyrsis a youth of the inspired train' – (*repeating*)

Dear Fainall, entertain Sir Wilfull; thou hast philosophy to undergo a fool, thou art married and hast patience. I would confer with my own thoughts.

MRS FAINALL

I am obliged to you, that you would make me your proxy in this affair, but I have business of my own.

Enter SIR WILFULL

Oh Sir Wilfull, you are come at the critical instant. There's your mistress up to the ears in love and contemplation; pursue your point, now or never.

SIR WILFULL

Yes, my aunt would have it so. I would gladly have been encouraged with a bottle or two, because I'm somewhat wary at first, before I am acquainted. (*this while MILLAMANT walks about repeating to herself*) But I hope after a time I shall break my mind – that is, upon further acquaintance – so, for the present, cousin, I'll take my leave. If so be

Mrs used of unmarried women
Suckling 1609–41: cavalier poet, whom, with
Waller (1606–87), Millamant keeps quoting

you'll be so kind to make my excuse, I'll return to my company.

MRS FAINALL

Oh fie Sir Wilfull! What, you must not be daunted.

SIR WILFULL

Daunted? No, that's not it, it is not so much for that – for if so be that I set on't, I'll do't. But only for the present, 'tis sufficient till further acquaintance, that's all. Your servant.

MRS FAINALL

Nay, I'll swear you shall never lose so favourable an opportunity if I can help it. I'll leave you together and lock the door. Exit

SIR WILFULL

Nay nay cousin – I have forgot my gloves – what d'ye do? 'Sheart! 'A¹ has locked the door indeed, I think! Nay, cousin Fainall, open the door! Pshaw, what a vixen trick is this? Nay, now 'a has seen me too! Cousin, I made bold to pass through as it were – I think this door's enchanted!

MILLAMANT (*repeating*)

'I prithee spare me, gentle boy,
Press me no more for that slight toy.'

SIR WILFULL

Anan? Cousin your servant.

MILLAMANT

'That foolish trifle of a heart –'

Sir Wilfull!

SIR WILFULL

Yes – your servant. No offence I hope, cousin.

MILLAMANT (*repeating*)

'I swear it will not do its part
Though thou dost thine, employest thy power and art.'
Natural, easy Suckling!

SIR WILFULL

Anan? Suckling? No such suckling¹ neither, cousin, nor stripling; I thank heaven I'm no minor.

MILLAMANT

Ah rustic! Ruder than Gothic!¹

SIR WILFULL

Well, well, I shall understand your lingo one of these days, cousin; in the meanwhile I must answer in plain English.

MILLAMANT

Have you any business with me, Sir Wilfull?

¹A she
suckling young child
Gothic savage

- 160 SIR WILFULL
Not at present, cousin. Yes, I made bold to see, to come and know if that how you were disposed to fetch a walk this evening; if so be that I might not be troublesome, I would have sought a walk with you.
- MILLAMANT
A walk? What then?
- 165 SIR WILFULL
Nay nothing – only for the walk's sake, that's all.
- MILLAMANT
I nauseate walking, 'tis a country diversion. I loathe the country and everything that relates to it.
- SIR WILFULL
Indeed? Hah! Look ye, look ye, you do? Nay, 'tis like you may. Here are choice of pastimes here in town, as plays and the like – that must be confessed indeed –
- 170 MILLAMANT
Ah, *l'étourdie* [the giddy thing]! I hate the town too.
- SIR WILFULL
Dear heart, that's much – hah! – that you should hate 'em both! Hah! 'Tis like you may; there are some can't relish the town, and others can't away with the country – 'tis like you may be one of those, cousin.
- 175 MILLAMANT
Ha, ha, ha! Yes, 'tis like I may. You have nothing further to say to me?
- SIR WILFULL
Not at present cousin; 'tis like, when I have an opportunity to be more private, I may break^t my mind in some measure – I conjecture you partly guess – however that's as time shall try; but spare to speak and spare to speed, as they say.
- 180 MILLAMANT
If it is of no great importance, Sir Wilfull, you will oblige me to leave me; I have just now a little business.
- SIR WILFULL
Enough, enough, cousin, yes, yes, all a case; when you're disposed, when you're disposed. Now's as well as another time, and another time as well as now. All's one for that. Yes, yes, if your concerns call you, there's no haste; it will keep cold, as they say. Cousin, your servant. I think this door's locked.
- MILLAMANT
You may go this way sir.

break reveal

- 120 SIR WILFULL
Your servant, then with your leave I'll return to my company. *Exit*
- MILLAMANT
Ay, ay, ha, ha, ha!
- 'Like Phoebe sung the no less amorous boy.'
- Enter MIRABELL
- MIRABELL
'Like Daphne^t she, as lovely and as coy.'
Do you lock yourself up from me, to make my search more curious?^t
Or is this pretty artifice contrived, to signify that here the chase must end, and my pursuit be crowned, for you can fly no further?
- 125 MILLAMANT
Vanity! No. I'll fly and be followed to the last moment, though I am upon the very verge of matrimony; I expect you should solicit me as much as if I were wavering at the grate of a monastery, with one foot over the threshold. I'll be solicited to the very last, nay, and afterwards.
- MIRABELL
What, after the last?
- MILLAMANT
Oh, I should think I was poor and had nothing to bestow if I were reduced to an inglorious ease, and freed from the agreeable fatigues of solicitation.
- 130 MILLAMANT
But do not you know that when favours are conferred upon instant and tedious solicitation that they diminish in their value, and that both the giver loses the grace and the receiver lessens his pleasure?
- MILLAMANT
It may be in things of common application, but never sure in love. Oh, I hate a lover that can dare to think he draws a moment's air independent on the bounty of his mistress. There's not so impudent a thing in nature as the saucy look of an assured man, confident of success. The pedantic arrogance of a very husband has not so pragmatical an air. Ah, I'll never marry, unless I am first made sure of my will and pleasure.
- 135 MIRABELL
Would you have 'em both before marriage, or will you be contented with the first now, and stay for the other till after grace?
- MILLAMANT
Ah don't be impertinent. My dear liberty, shall I leave thee? My faithful solitude, my darling contemplation, must I bid you then adieu?

Daphne pursued by Phoebus Apollo

curious anxious

150 Ay-h, adieu; my morning thoughts, agreeable wakings, indolent slumbers, all ye *douceurs* [sweet things], ye *sommeils du matin* [morning slumbers], adieu? I can't do't, 'tis more than impossible. Positively, Mirabell, I'll lie a-bed in a morning as long as I please.

MIRABELL

Then I'll get up in a morning as early as I please.

MILLAMANT

155 Ah, idle creature, get up when you will – and, d'ye hear, I won't be called names after I'm married; positively, I won't be called names.

MIRABELL

Names!

MILLAMANT

160 Ay, as wife, spouse, my dear, joy, jewel, love, sweetheart, and the rest of that nauseous cant in which men and their wives are so fulsomely familiar. I shall never bear that. Good Mirabell, don't let us be familiar or fond, nor kiss before folks like my Lady Fadler¹ and Sir Francis, nor go to Hyde Park together the first Sunday in a new chariot, to provoke eyes and whispers, and then never be seen there together again; as if we were proud of one another the first week, and ashamed of one another for ever after. Let us never visit together, nor go to a play together, but let us be very strange² and well-bred; let us be as strange as if we had been married a great while, and as well-bred as if we were not married at all.

MIRABELL

170 Have you any more conditions to offer? Hitherto your demands are pretty reasonable.

MILLAMANT

175 Trifles – as, liberty to pay and receive visits to and from whom I please, to write and receive letters, without interrogatories or wry faces on your part; to wear what I please, and choose conversation with regard only to my own taste; to have no obligation upon me to converse with wits that I don't like, because they are your acquaintance, or to be intimate with fools, because they may be your relations. Come to dinner when I please, dine in my dressing-room when I'm out of humour, without giving a reason. To have my closet³ inviolate, to be sole empress of my tea table, which you must never presume to approach without first asking leave; and lastly, wherever I am, you shall always knock at the door before you come in. These articles subscribed, if I continue to endure you a little longer, I may by degrees dwindle into a wife.

Fadler Fondler
strange discant

closet private room

MIRABELL

185 Your bill of fare is something advanced in this latter account. Well, have I liberty to offer conditions, that when you are dwindled into a wife, I may not be beyond measure enlarged into a husband?

MILLAMANT

You have free leave; propose your utmost, speak and spare not.

MIRABELL

190 I thank you. *Imprimis*⁴ [first] then, I covenant that your acquaintance be general; that you admit no sworn confidante or intimate of your own sex, no she-friend to screen her affairs under your countenance and tempt you to make trial of a mutual secrecy; no decoy-duck to wheedle you a fop, scrambling to the play in a mask,⁵ then bring you home in a pretended fright when you think you shall be found out, and rail at me for missing the play, and disappointing the frolic, which you had to pick me up and prove my constancy!

195

MILLAMANT

Detestable *imprimis*! I go to the play in a mask!

MIRABELL

Item, I article that you continue to like your own face as long as I shall, and while it passes current with me, that you endeavour not to new-coin it. To which end, together with all vizards⁶ for the day, I prohibit all masks for the night made of oiled skins and I know not what – hog's bones, hare's gall, pig-water, and the marrow of a roasted cat. In short, I forbid all commerce with the gentlewoman in what-d'ye-call-it Court. *Item*, I shut my doors against all bawds with baskets, and pennyworths of muslin, china, fans, atlases, etc. *Item*, when you shall be breeding –

205

MILLAMANT

Ah! Name it not.

MIRABELL

Which may be presumed, with a blessing on your endeavours –

MILLAMANT

Odious endeavours!

MIRABELL

210 I denounce against all strait-lacing, squeezing, for a shape, till you mould my boy's head like a sugar-loaf,⁷ and instead of a man-child make me the father to a crooked billet.⁸ Lastly, to the dominion of the tea table I submit, but with proviso that you exceed not in your province, but restrain yourself to native and simple tea table drinks, as tea, chocolate and coffee; as, likewise, to genuine and authorised

Imprimis Mirabell uses legal terms
in a mask as ladies often did
vizard mask
sugar-loaf tall, moulded shape
billet log

215 tea table talk, such as mending of fashions, spoiling reputations, railing at absent friends, and so forth; but that on no account you encroach upon the men's prerogative and presume to drink healths or toast fellows; for prevention of which I banish all foreign forces,² all auxiliaries to the tea table, as orange brandy, all aniseed, cinnamon, citron and Barbadoes waters, together with ratafia and the most noble spirit of clary. But, for crowslip wine, poppy water and all dormitives,³ those I allow. These provisos admitted, in other things I may prove a tractable and complying husband.

MILLAMANT

220 Oh horrid provisos! Filthy strong waters! I toast fellows, odious men! I hate your odious provisos!

MIRABELL

Then we're agreed. Shall I kiss your hand upon the contract? And here comes one to be a witness to the sealing of the deed.

Enter MRS FAINALL

MILLAMANT

Fainall, what shall I do? Shall I have him? I think I must have him.

MRS FAINALL

Ay, ay, take him, take him, what should you do?

MILLAMANT

230 Well then – I'll take my death I'm in a horrid fright – Fainall, I shall never say it – well – I think – I'll endure you.

MRS FAINALL

Fie, fie, have him, have him, and tell him so in plain terms; for I am sure you have a mind to him.

MILLAMANT

235 Are you? I think I have; and the horrid man looks as if he thought so too. Well, you ridiculous thing you, I'll have you – I won't be kissed, nor I won't be thanked – here, kiss my hand though – so, hold your tongue now, and don't say a word.

MRS FAINALL

240 Mirabell, there's a necessity for your obedience: you have neither time to talk nor stay. My mother is coming, and, in my conscience, if she should see you, would fall into fits and maybe not recover time enough to return to Sir Rowland, who as Foible tells me is in a fair way to succeed. Therefore, spare your ecstasies for another occasion and slip down the back stairs, where Foible waits to consult you.

MILLAMANT

245 Ay, go, go. In the mean time I suppose you have said something to please me.

foreign forces all pungent or alcoholic drinks *dormitives* sleeping draughts

MIRABELL

I am all obedience.

Exit

MRS FAINALL

Yonder Sir Wilfull's drunk, and so noisy that my mother has been forced to leave Sir Rowland to appease him, but he answers her only with singing and drinking. What they have done by this time I know not, but Petulant and he were upon quarrelling as I came by.

250

MILLAMANT

Well, if Mirabell should not make a good husband, I am a lost thing, for I find I love him violently . . .

1700

Colley Cibber

1671–1757

The son of a well-known sculptor, Cibber (pronounced 'K') became an actor and dramatist, best known for genteel sentimental comedy and a popular adaptation of Shakespeare's *Richard III*. He was made Poet Laureate in 1743, in preference to many better writers, and was duly satirised by Pope, his old antagonist, as the epitome of literary dullness in the revised *Dunciad* of 1743. Insensitive and egocentric though he was, his *Apology* for his life (1740), an autobiography, is a valuable document of theatrical history, and often reveals a pleasant, common-sensical personality.

From AN APOLOGY FOR THE LIFE OF COLLEY CIBBER

[*A Cheerful Dunce?*]

When I look into my present self, and afterwards cast my eye round all my hopes, I don't see any one pursuit of them that should so reasonably rouse me out of a nod in my great chair, as a call to those agreeable parties I have sometimes the happiness to mix with, where I always assert the equal liberty of leaving them, when my spirits have done their best with them.

Now, Sir, as I have been making my way for above forty years through a crowd of cares (all which, by the favour of Providence, I have honestly got rid of), is it a time of day for me to leave off those fooleries, and to set up a new character? Can it be worth my while to waste my spirits, to bake my blood, with serious contemplations, and perhaps impair my health, in the fruitless study of advancing myself into the better opinion of those very – very few wise men that are as old as I am? No, the part I have acted in real life, shall be all of a piece.

— *Servetur ad inum*,

Qualis ab incepto processerit. (Horace)

[Let it continue to the end as it has from the first]

I will not go out of my character, by straining to be wiser than I *can* be, or by being more affectedly pensive than I *need* be; whatever I am,

20 men of sense will know me to be, put on what disguise I will; I can no more put off my follies, than my skin; I have often tried, but they stick too close to me; nor am I sure my friends are displeased with them; for, beside that in this light I afford them frequent matter of mirth, they may possibly be less uneasy at their *own* foibles, when they have so old a precedent to keep them in countenance: nay, there are some frank enough to confess, they envy what they laugh at; and when I have seen others, whose rank and fortune have laid a sort of restraint upon their liberty of pleasing their company, by pleasing themselves, I have said softly to myself – Well, there is some advantage in having neither rank nor fortune! Not but there are among them a third sort, who have the particular happiness of unbending into the very wantonness of good-humour, without depreciating their dignity: he that is not master of that freedom, let his condition be never so exalted, must still want something to come up to the happiness of his inferiors who enjoy it. If Socrates[†] could take pleasure in playing at Even or Odd with his children, or Agesilaus[†] divert himself in riding the hobby-horse with them, am I obliged to be as eminent as either of them before I am as frolicsome? If the Emperor Hadrian,[†] near his death, could play with his very soul, his Animula, &c. and regret that it could no longer be companionable; if greatness, at the same time, was not the delight he was so loath to part with, sure then these cheerful amusements I am contending for, must have no inconsiderable share in our happiness; he that does not choose to live his own way, suffers others to choose for him. Give me the joy I always took in the end of an old song,

My Mind, my Mind is a Kingdom to me!

45 If I can please myself with my own follies, have I not a plentiful provision for life? If the world thinks me a trifler, I don't desire to break in upon their wisdom; let them call me any fool, but an uncheerful one! I live as I write; while my way amuses me, it's as well as I with it; when another writes better, I can like him too, though he should not like me. Not our great Imitator[†] of Horace himself can have more pleasure in writing his verses, than I have in reading them, though I sometimes find myself there (as Shakespeare[†] terms it) *dispraisingly* spoken of: if he is a little fret with me, I am generally in good company, he is as blunt with my betters; so that even here I might laugh in my turn. My superiors, perhaps, may be mended by him; but, for my part, I own myself incorrigible: I look upon my follies as the best part of my fortune, and am more concerned to be a good husband of them, than of that; not do I believe I shall ever be rhymed out of them. . . .

Socrates (469–399 bc) Greek philosopher
Agesilaus (400–360 bc) Spartan king
Hadrian (ad 76–138) Roman emperor

Imitator Pope in the 1730s
Shakespeare *Othello*, III.3.73

60 [The Status of Actors]

The allurements of a theatre are still so strong in my memory, that perhaps few, except those who have felt them, can conceive: and I am yet so far willing to excuse my folly, that I am convinced, were it possible to take off that disgrace and prejudice, which custom has thrown upon the profession of an actor, many a well-born younger brother, and beauty of low fortune would gladly have adorned the theatre, who by their not being able to brook such dishonour to their birth, have passed away their lives decently unheeded and forgotten.

Many years ago, when I was first in the management of the theatre, I remember a strong instance, which will show you what degree of ignominy the profession of an actor was then held at – A lady, with a real title, whose female indiscretions had occasioned her family to abandon her, being willing in her distress to make an honest penny of what beauty she had left, desired to be admitted as an actress; when before she could receive our answer, a gentleman (probably by her relation's permission) advised us not to entertain her, for reasons easy to be guessed. You may imagine we could not be so blind to our interest as to make an honourable family our unnecessary enemies, by not taking his advice; which the lady too being sensible[†] of, saw the affair had its difficulties; and therefore pursued it no further. Now it is not hard that it should be a doubt, whether this lady's condition or ours were the more melancholy? For here, you find her honest endeavour, to get bread from the stage, was looked upon as an addition of new scandal to her former dishonour! So that I am afraid, according to this way of thinking, had the same lady stooped to have sold patches and pomatum, in a bandbox, from door to door, she might in that occupation have starved with less infamy than had she relieved her necessities by being famous on the theatre. Whether this prejudice may have arisen from the abuses that so often have crept in upon the stage, I am not clear in; though when that is grossly the case, I will allow there ought to be no limits set to the contempt of it; yet in its lowest condition, in my time, methinks there could have been no great pretence of preferring the bandbox to the buskin.[‡] But this severe opinion, whether merited or not, is not the greatest distress that this profession is liable to.

I shall now give you another anecdote, quite the reverse of what I have instanced, wherein you will see an actress as hardly used for an act of modesty (which, without being a prude, a woman, even upon the stage, may sometimes think it necessary not to throw off). This too I am forced to premise, that the truth of what I am going to tell you may not be sneered at before it be known. About the year 1717, a

sensible aware

buskin actor's shoe

young actress, of a desirable person, sitting in an upper box at the opera, a military gentleman thought this a proper opportunity to secure a little conversation with her; the particulars of which were, probably, no more worth repeating than it seems the *Damoiselle* then thought them worth listening to; for, notwithstanding the fine things he said to her, she rather chose to give the music the preference of her attention.

This indifference was so offensive to his high heart, that he began to change the tender into the terrible, and, in short, proceeded at last to treat her in a style too grossly insulting for the meanest female ear to endure unresented: upon which, being beaten too far out of her discretion, she turned hastily upon him with an angry look and a reply which seemed to set his mérit in so low a regard that he thought himself obliged in honour to take his time to resent it. This was the full extent of her crime, which his glory delayed no longer to punish, than till the next time she was to appear upon the stage. There, in one of her best parts, wherein she drew a favourable regard and approbation from the audience, he, dispensing with the respect which some people think due to a polite assembly, began to interrupt her performance with such loud and various notes of mockery as other young men of honour, in the same place, have sometimes made themselves undauntedly merry with: thus, deaf to all murmurs or entreaties of those about him, he pursued his point, even to throwing near her such trash as no person can be supposed to carry about him, unless to use on so particular an occasion.

A gentleman then behind the scenes, being shocked at his unmanly behaviour, was warm enough to say, that no man, but a fool, or a bully, could be capable of insulting an audience, or a woman, in so monstrous a manner. The former valiant gentleman, to whose ear the words were soon brought by his spies whom he had placed behind the scenes to observe how the action was taken there, came immediately from the pit in a heat and demanded to know of the author of those words, if he was the person that spoke them. To which he calmly replied, that though he had never seen him before, yet, since he seemed so earnest to be satisfied, he would do him the favour to own, that, indeed, the words were his, and that they would be the last words he should choose to deny, whoever they might fall upon. To conclude, their dispute was ended the next morning in Hyde Park, where the determined combatant, who first asked for satisfaction, was obliged afterwards to ask his life too; whether he mended it or not, I have not yet heard; but his antagonist, in a few years after, died in one of the principal posts of the Government.

Now though I have sometimes known these gallant insulters of audiences draw themselves into scrapes which they have less honourably got out of, yet, alas! what has that availed? This generous public-spirited method of silencing a few, was but repelling the disease in one

85 part, to make it break out in another: all endeavours at protection are new provocations to those who pride themselves in pushing their courage to a defiance of humanity. Even when a Royal resentment has shown itself in the behalf of an injured actor, it has been unable to defend him from further insults! an instance of which happened in the late King James's time. Mr Smith (whose character as a gentleman could have been no way impeached, had he not degraded it by being a celebrated actor) had the misfortune, in a dispute with a gentleman behind the scenes, to receive a blow from him: the same night an account of this action was carried to the King, to whom the gentleman was represented so grossly in the wrong that, the next day, his Majesty sent to forbid him the Court upon it. This indignity cast upon a gentleman, only for having maltreated a player, was looked upon as the concern of every gentleman; and a party was soon formed to assert and vindicate their honour, by humbling this favoured actor, whose slight injury had been judged equal to so severe a notice. Accordingly, the next time Smith acted, he was received with a chorus of cat-calls, that soon convinced him he should not be suffered to proceed in his part; upon which, without the least discomposure, he ordered the curtain to be dropped; and, having a competent fortune of his own, thought the conditions of adding to it, by his remaining upon the stage, were too dear, and from that day entirely quitted it. I shall make no observation upon the King's resentment, or on that of his good subjects; how far either was or was not right, is not the point I dispute for: be that as it may, the unhappy condition of the actor was so far from being relieved by this Royal interposition in his favour, that it was the worse for it.

While these sort of real distresses on the stage are so unavoidable, it is no wonder that young people of sense (though of low fortune) should be so rarely found to supply a succession of good actors. Why then may we not, in some measure, impute the scarcity of them to the wanton inhumanity of those spectators who have made it so terribly mean to appear there? Were there no ground for this question, where could be the disgrace of entering into a society whose institution, when not abused, is a delightful school of morality; and where to excel, requires as ample endowments of nature, as any one profession (that of holy institution excepted) whatsoever? . . .

1740

Joseph Addison

1672–1719

Sir Richard Steele

1672–1729

Addison was educated at Charterhouse with his future colleague, Richard Steele, and at Oxford, where he became a fellow of Magdalen College. A classical scholar, he wrote Latin poetry and travelled on the Continent 1699–1703 (*Dialogues upon Ancient Medals*). A Whig supporter, he celebrated Marlborough's victories in verse (*The Campaign*, 1705), was an MP 1708–19, and held important offices (Under-Secretary of State; Chief Secretary for Ireland). With Congreve and Steele, he was a member of the Whig Kit-Cat Club. After contributing papers to Steele's tri-weekly *Tatler* (1709–11), Addison joined him as editor of the daily *Spectator* (March 1711–December 1712; tri-weekly, June–December 1714, by Addison). Their invention of the Club as a microcosm of English society (with Sir Roger de Coverley from the country gentry, Sir Andrew Freeport from business) allowed them agreeably to instruct the rising middle classes in questions of social behaviour and literary taste, with series of papers on imagination, ballads and *Paradise Lost*. Addison, whose prose Johnson praised as 'the model of the middle style', was one of the major influences on the middle classes for well over a century. A successful classical dramatist (*Cato*, 1713), husband of a countess, and centre of a literary clique, he was lukewarm about the rising talent of Pope, who sketched him as 'Atticus' in the *Epistle to Arbuthnot*.

Steele was born in Dublin, educated at Oxford, and became a captain in the Guards. Early comedies were followed by the periodicals with Addison and others. Having written in the Whig interest (an MP 1713–14 and later), he was knighted 1715. His moral concerns and his reaction against Restoration comedy's degeneracy are seen in his last play, *The Conscious Lovers* (1722), influential on domestic and sentimental literature.

The Spectator

No. 2 [The Club] Friday March 2 1711
[STEELE]

... Ast Alit sex
Et plures uno conclamant ore.
[Six and more cry out with one voice]

Juvenal [Satires, 7.167-8]

The first of our society is a gentleman of Worcestershire, of ancient descent, a baronet, his name Sir Roger de Coverley. His great grandfather was inventor of that famous country dance[†] which is called after him. All who know that shire are very well acquainted with the parts and merits of Sir Roger. He is a gentleman that is very singular in his behaviour, but his singularities proceed from his good sense, and are contradictions to the manners of the world, only as he thinks the world is in the wrong. However, this humour creates him no enemies, for he does nothing with sourness or obstinacy; and his being unconfined to modes and forms, makes him but the reader and more capable to please and oblige all who know him. When he is in town he lives in Soho Square:[†] it is said he keeps himself a bachelor by reason he was crossed in love, by a perverse beautiful widow of the next county to him. Before this disappointment, Sir Roger was what you call a fine gentleman, had often supped with my Lord Rochester and Sir George Etherege, fought a duel upon his first coming to town, and kicked Bully Dawson[†] in a public coffee-house for calling him youngster. But being ill-used by the abovementioned widow, he was very serious for a year and a half; and though his temper being naturally jovial, he at last got over it, he grew careless of himself and never dressed afterwards; he continues to wear a coat and doublet of the same cut that were in fashion at the time of his repulse, which, in his merry humours, he tells us, has been in and out twelve times since he first wore it. 'Tis said Sir Roger grew humble in his desires after he had forgot this cruel beauty, insomuch that it is reported he has frequently offended in point of chastity with beggars and gypsies; but this is looked upon by his friends rather as matter of raillery than truth. He is now in his fifty-sixth year, cheerful, gay, and hearty, keeps a good house both in town and country; a great lover of mankind; but there is such a mirthful cast in his

country dance it dates from the 1680s
Soho Square then fashionable, far from commercial City
Rochester ... Dawson Rochester the poet;
Etherege (?1635-91), the dramatist;
Dawson, a sharper: notorious Restoration rakes

behaviour, that he is rather beloved than esteemed: his tenants grow rich, his servants look satisfied, all the young women profess love to him, and the young men are glad of his company; when he comes into a house he calls the servants by their names, and talks all the way up stairs to a visit. I must not omit that Sir Roger is a Justice[†] of the *Quorum*; that he fills the chair at a quarter session with great abilities, and three months ago gained universal applause by explaining a passage in the Game Act.

The gentleman next in esteem and authority among us, is another bachelor, who is a member of the Inner Temple,[†] a man of great probity, wit, and understanding; but he has chosen his place of residence rather to obey the direction of an old humoursome[†] father than in pursuit of his own inclinations. He was placed there to study the laws of the land, and is the most learned of any of the house in those of the stage. Aristotle and Longinus[†] are much better understood by him than Littleton or Coke. The father sends up every post questions relating to marriage articles, leases, and tenures, in the neighbourhood; all which questions he agrees with an attorney to answer and take care of in the lump: he is studying the passions themselves, when he should be inquiring into the debates among men which arise from them. He knows the argument of each of the Orations of Demosthenes and Tully,[†] but not one case in the reports of our own courts. No one ever took him for a fool, but none, except his intimate friends, know he has a great deal of wit. This turn makes him at once both disinterested and agreeable: as few of his thoughts are drawn from business, they are most of them fit for conversation. His taste of books is a little too just for the age he lives in; he has read all, but approves of very few. His familiarity with the customs, manners, actions, and writings of the ancients, makes him a very delicate observer of what occurs to him in the present world. He is an excellent critic, and the time of the play, is his hour of business; exactly at five he passes through New-Inn,[†] crosses through Russel Court, and takes a turn at Will's[†] till the play begins; he has his shoes rubbed and his periwig powdered at the barber's as you go into the Rose.[†] It is for the good of the audience when he is at a play, for the actors have an ambition to please him.

The person of next consideration is Sir Andrew Freeport, a merchant

<i>Justice</i> a local magistrate	<i>Demosthenes, Tully</i> Greek (383-322 bc) and Roman orators; Tully: M. Tullius Cicero (106-43 bc)
<i>Inner Temple</i> body of lawyers and students	<i>New-Inn</i> he goes from the legal area to the literary world near Covent Garden
<i>humoursome</i> capricious	<i>Will's</i> Will's Coffee House
<i>Aristotle ... Longinus</i> Aristotle 384-322 bc philosopher and, like Longinus (1st century ad), literary critic rather than legal commentator	<i>Rose</i> the Rose Tavern

of great eminence in the City of London: a person of indefatigable industry, strong reason, and great experience. His notions of trade are noble and generous, and (as every rich man has usually some sly way of jesting, which would make no great figure were he not a rich man) he calls the sea the British Common. He is acquainted with commerce in all its parts, and will tell you that it is a stupid and barbarous way to extend dominion by arms; for true power is to be got by arts and industry. He will often argue, that if this part of our trade were well cultivated, we should gain from one nation; and if another, from another. I have heard him prove, that diligence makes more lasting acquisitions than valour, and that sloth has ruined more nations than the sword. He abounds in several frugal maxims, among which the greatest favourite is, 'A penny saved is a penny got.' A general trader of good sense is pleasanter company than a general scholar; and Sir Andrew having a natural unaffected eloquence, the perspicuity of his discourse gives the same pleasure that wit would in another man. He has made his fortunes himself; and says that England may be richer than other kingdoms, by as plain methods as he himself is richer than other men; though at the same time I can say this of him, that there is not a point in the compass but blows home a ship in which he is an owner.

Next to Sir Andrew in the Club-room sits Captain Sentry, a gentleman of great courage, good understanding, but invincible modesty. He is one of those that deserve very well, but are very awkward at putting their talents within the observation of such as should take notice of them. He was some years a captain, and behaved himself with great gallantry in several engagements and at several sieges; but having a small estate of his own, and being next heir to Sir Roger, he has quitted a way of life in which no man can rise suitably to his merit, who is not something of a courtier as well as a soldier. I have heard him often lament, that in a profession where merit is placed in so conspicuous a view, impudence should get the better of modesty. When he has talked to this purpose I never heard him make a sour expression, but frankly confess that he left the world because he was not fit for it. A strict honesty and an even regular behaviour are in themselves obstacles to him that must press through crowds who endeavour at the same end with himself, the favour of a commander. He will however in this way of talk excuse generals for not disposing according to men's desert, or inquiring into it: For, says he, that great man who has a mind to help him, has as many to break through to come at me, as I have to come at him; therefore he will conclude, that the man who would make a figure, especially in a military way, must get over all false modesty, and assist his patron against the importunity of other pretenders by a proper assurance in his own vindication. He says it is a civil cowardice to be

backward in asserting what you ought to expect, as it is a military fear to be slow in attacking when it is your duty. With this candour does the gentleman speak of himself and others. The same frankness runs through all his conversation. The military part of his life has furnished him with many adventures, in the relation of which he is very agreeable to the company; for he is never over-bearing, though accustomed to command men in the utmost degree below him; nor ever too obsequious, from an habit of obeying men highly above him.

But that our society may not appear a set of humourists¹ unacquainted with the gallantries and pleasures of the age, we have among us the gallant Will. Honeycomb, a gentleman who according to his years should be in the decline of his life, but having ever been very careful of his person, and always had a very easy fortune, time has made but very little impression, either by wrinkles on his forehead, or traces in his brain. His person is well turned, of a good height. He is very ready at that sort of discourse with which men usually entertain women. He has all his life dressed very well, and remembers habits as others do men. He can smile when one speaks to him, and laughs easily. He knows the history of every mode, and can inform you from which of the French King's wenchers our wives and daughters had this manner of curling their hair, that way of placing their hoods; whose frailty was covered by such a sort of petticoat, and whose vanity to show her foot made that part of the dress so short in such a year. In a word, all his conversation and knowledge has been in the female world: as other men of his age will take notice to you what such a minister said upon such and such an occasion, he will tell you when the Duke of Monmouth danced at Court such a woman was then smitten, another was taken with him at the head of his troop in the Park. In all these important relations, he has ever about the same time received a kind glance or a blow of a fan from some celebrated beauty, mother of the present Lord such-a-one. If you speak of a young Commoner² that said a lively thing in the House, he starts up, 'He has good blood in his veins, Tom Mirabell begot him, the rogue cheated me in that affair; that young fellow's mother used me more like a dog than any woman I ever made advances to.' This way of talking of his very much enlivens the conversation among us of a more sedate turn; and I find there is not one of the company but myself, who rarely speak at all, but speaks of him as of that sort of man who is usually called a well-bred fine gentleman. To conclude his character, where women are not concerned, he is an honest worthy man.

I cannot tell whether I am to account him whom I am next to speak of, as one of our company; for he visits us but seldom, but when he

humourists faddists, cranks

Commoner member of House of Commons

does it adds to every man else a new enjoyment of himself. He is a clergyman, a very philosophic man, of general learning, great sanctity of life, and the most exact good breeding. He has the misfortune to be of a very weak constitution, and consequently cannot accept of such cares and business as preferments[†] in his function would oblige him to: he is therefore among divines what a chamber-counsellor is among lawyers. The probity of his mind, and the integrity of his life, create him followers, as being eloquent or loud advances others. He seldom introduces the subject he speaks upon; but we are so far gone in years, that he observes, when he is among us, an earnestness to have him fall on some divine topic, which he always treats with much authority, as one who has no interests in this world, as one who is hastening to the object of all his wishes, and conceives hope from his decays and infirmities. These are my ordinary companions.

No. 70 [The Ballad] Monday May 21 1711

[ADDISON]

Interdum vulgus rectum videt.

[Sometimes the public see things rightly.]

Horace [*Epistles*, 2.1.63]

When I travelled, I took a particular delight in hearing the songs and fables that are come from father to son, and are most in vogue among the common people of the countries through which I passed; for it is impossible that any thing should be universally tasted and approved by a multitude, though they are only the rabble of a nation, which hath not in it some peculiar aptness to please and gratify the mind of man. Human nature is the same in all reasonable creatures; and whatever falls in with it, will meet with admirers amongst readers of all qualities and conditions. Molière, as we are told by Monsieur Boileau,[†] used to read all his comedies to an old woman who was his housekeeper, as she sat with him at her work by the chimney-corner; and could foretell the success of his play in the theatre, from the reception it met at his fireside: for he tells us the audience always followed the old woman, and never failed to laugh in the same place.

I know nothing which more shows the essential and inherent perfection of simplicity of thought, above that which I call the Gothic manner in writing, than this, that the first pleases all kinds of palates,

preferments promotions
Molière . . . Boileau Molière (1622–73)

French comic dramatist, friend of the poet and critic Boileau (1636–1711)

and the latter only such as have formed to themselves a wrong artificial taste, upon little fanciful authors and writers of epigram. Homer, Virgil, or Milton, so far as the language of their poems is understood, will please a reader of plain common sense, who would neither relish nor comprehend an epigram of Martial or a poem of Cowley:[†] so, on the contrary, an ordinary song or ballad that is the delight of the common people, cannot fail to please all such readers as are not unqualified for the entertainment by their affectation or ignorance; and the reason is plain, because the same paintings of nature which recommended it to the most ordinary reader, will appear beautiful to the most refined.

The old song of *Chevy Chase*[†] is the favourite ballad of the common people of England; and Ben Jonson used to say he had rather have been the author of it than of all his works. Sir Philip Sidney[†] in his discourse of poetry speaks of it in the following words: 'I never heard the old song of Percy and Douglas, that I found not my heart more moved than with a trumpet; and yet it is sung by some blind crowder[†] with no rougher voice than rude style; which being so evil apparelled in the dust and cobweb of that uncivil age, what would it work trimmed in the gorgeous eloquence of Pindar?'[†] For my own part, I am so professed an admirer of this antiquated song, that I shall give my reader a critique upon it, without any further apology for so doing.

The greatest modern critics have laid it down as a rule, that an heroic poem should be founded upon some important precept of morality, adapted to the constitution of the country in which the poet writes. Homer and Virgil have formed their plans in this view. As Greece was a collection of many governments, who suffered very much among themselves, and gave the Persian emperor, who was their common enemy, many advantages over them by their mutual jealousies and animosities, Homer, in order to establish among them an union, which was so necessary for their safety, grounds his poem upon the discords of the several Grecian princes who were engaged in a confederacy against an Asiatic prince, and the several advantages which the enemy gained by such their discords. At the time the poem we are now treating of was written, the dissensions of the barons, who were then so many petty princes, ran very high, whether they quarrelled among themselves or with their neighbours, and produced unspeakable calamities to the country: the poet, to deter men from such unnatural contentions, describes a bloody battle and dreadful scene of death, occasioned by

Martial . . . Cowley Martial, Latin epigrammatist (d. ad 104); influenced Abraham Cowley (1618–67) – see extract

from Johnson's 'Life'

Chevy Chase Addison quotes one of the versions of an ancient border ballad

Sidney (1554–86) poet and soldier; *A Defence of Poetry*, publ. 1595

crowder fiddler

Pindar (d. 443 bc) Greek lyric poet

the mutual feuds which reigned in the families[†] of an English and Scotch nobleman. That he designed this for the instruction of his poem, we may learn from his four last lines, in which, after the example of the modern tragedians, he draws from it a precept for the benefit of his readers.

God save the King and bless the land
In plenty, joy, and peace;
And grant henceforth that foul debate
'Twixt noblemen may cease.

65 The next point observed by the greatest heroic poets, hath been to celebrate persons and actions which do honour to their country: thus Virgil's hero was the founder of Rome, Homer's a prince of Greece; and for this reason Valerius Flaccus and Statius, who were both Romans, might be justly derided for having chosen the Expedition of the Golden Fleece and the Wars of Thebes, for the subjects of their epic writings.[†]

70 The poet before us, has not only found out an hero in his own country, but raises the reputation of it by several beautiful incidents. The English are the first who take the field, and the last who quit it. The English bring only fifteen hundred to the battle, the Scotch two thousand. The English keep the field with fifty-three: the Scotch retire with fifty-five: all the rest on each side being slain in battle. But the most remarkable circumstance of this kind, is the different manner in which the Scotch and English kings receive the news of this fight, and of the great men's deaths who commanded in it.

80 This news was brought to Edinburgh,
Where Scotland's King did reign,
That brave Earl Douglas suddenly
Was with an arrow slain.

85 O heavy news, King James did say,
Scotland can witness be,
I have not any captain more
Of such account as he.

90 Like tidings to King Henry came
Within as short a space,
That Percy of Northumberland
Was slain in Chevy-Chase.

95 Now God be with him, said our King,
Sith 'twill no better be,
I trust I have within my realm
Five hundred as good as he.

families Percy and Douglas

writings Argonautica and Thebais respectively

Yet shall not Scot nor Scotland say
But I will vengeance take,
And he revenged on them all
For brave Lord Percy's sake.

100 This vow full well the King performed
After on Humble-down,
In one day fifty knights were slain
With lords of great renown.

105 And of the rest of small account
Did many thousands die, etc.

At the same time that our poet shows a laudable partiality to his countrymen, he represents the Scots after a manner not unbecoming so bold and brave a people.

110 Earl Douglas on a milk-white steed,
Most like a baron bold,
Rode foremost of the company
Whose armour shone like gold.

115 His sentiments and actions are every way suitable to an hero. One of us two, says he, must die: I am an earl as well as yourself, so that you can have no pretence for refusing the combat: however, says he, 'tis pity, and indeed would be a sin, that so many innocent men should perish for our sakes; rather let you and I end our quarrel in single fight.

Ere thus I will out-braved be,
One of us two shall die;
I know thee well, an earl thou art,
Lord Percy, so am I.

120 But trust me, Percy, pity it were,
And great offence, to kill
Any of these our harmless men,
For they have done no ill.

125 Let thou and I the battle try,
And set our men aside;
Accurst be he, Lord Percy said,
By whom this is denied.

130 When these brave men had distinguished themselves in the battle and in single combat with each other, in the midst of a generous parley, full of heroic sentiments, the Scotch earl falls; and with his dying words encourages his men to revenge his death, representing to them, as the

most bitter circumstances of it, that his rival saw him fall.

135 With that there came an arrow keen
Out of an English bow,
Which struck Earl Douglas to the heart
A deep and deadly blow.

140 Who never spoke more words than these,
Fight on my merry men all;
For why, my life is at an end,
Lord Percy sees my fall.

145 'Merry men', in the language of those times, is no more than a cheerful word for companions and fellow-soldiers. A passage in the eleventh book of Virgil's *Aeneid* is very much to be admired, where Camilla in her last agonies, instead of weeping over the wound she had received, as one might have expected from a warrior of her sex, considers only (like the hero of whom we are now speaking) how the battle should be continued after her death.

150 Tum sic exspirans, etc.
A gathering mist o'erclouds her cheerful eyes;
And from her cheeks the rosy colour flies.
Then, turns to her, whom, of her female train,
She trusted most, and thus she speaks with pain.
155 'Acca, 'tis past! He swims before my sight,
Inexorable death; and claims his right.
Bear my last words to Turnus, fly with speed,
And bid him timely to my charge succeed:
Repel the Trojans, and the town relieve:
160 Farewell. . . .' [transl. Dryden]

Turnus did not die in so heroic a manner; though our poet seems to have had his eye upon Turnus's speech in the last verse

Lord Percy sees my fall.
165 . . . Vicisti, et victum tendere palmas
Ausonii videre. . . .
[You have conquered, and the Ausonians have seen me
defeated stretch out my hands]

170 Earl Percy's lamentation over his enemy is generous, beautiful, and passionate; I must only caution the reader not to let the simplicity of the style, which one may well pardon in so old a poet, prejudice him against the greatness of the thought.

175 Then leaving life Earl Percy took
The dead man by the hand,
And said Earl Douglas for thy life
Would I had lost my land.

O Christ! my very heart doth bleed
With sorrow for thy sake;
For sure a more renowned knight
Mischance did never take.

180 That beautiful line *Taking the dead man by the hand*, will put the reader in mind of Aeneas's behaviour towards Lausus, whom he himself had slain as he came to the rescue of his aged father.

185 At vero ut vultum vidit morientis, et ora,
ora modis Anchisiades, pallentia miris:
ingemuit, miserans graviter, dextramque tetendit, etc.
The pious prince beheld young Lausus dead;
He grieved, he wept; then grasped his hand, and said,
'Poor hapless youth! What praises can be paid
To worth so great . . .!' [transl. Dryden]

190 I shall take another opportunity to consider the other parts of this old song.

No. 74 [*The Ballad, continued*] Friday May 25 1711

[ADDISON]

. . . *Pendent opera interrupta*. . . .
[The works are suspended] Virgil [*Aeneid*, 4.88]

195 In my last Monday's paper I gave some general instances of those beautiful strokes which please the reader in the old song of *Chevy Chase*; I shall here, according to my promise, be more particular, and show that the sentiments in that ballad are extremely natural and poetical, and full of the majestic simplicity which we admire in the greatest of the ancient poets: for which reason I shall quote several passages of it, in which the thought is altogether the same with what we meet in several passages of the *Aeneid*; not that I would infer from thence that the poet (whoever he was) proposed to himself any imitation of those passages, but that he was directed to them in general by the same kind of poetical genius, and by the same copyings after nature.

200 Had this old song been filled with epigrammatical turns and points of wit, it might perhaps have pleased the wrong taste of some readers;

205 but it would never have become the delight of the common people, nor have warmed the heart of Sir Philip Sidney like the sound of a trumpet; it is only nature that can have this effect, and please those tastes which are the most unprejudiced or the most refined. I must however beg leave to dissent from so great an authority as that of Sir Philip Sidney, in the judgement which he has passed as to the rude style and evil apparel of this antiquated song; for there are several parts in it where not only the thought but the language is majestic, and the numbers sonorous; at least, the apparel is much more gorgeous than many of the poets made use of in Queen Elizabeth's time, as the reader will see in several of the following quotations.

215 What can be greater than either the thought or the expression in that stanza,

To drive the deer with hound and horn
 Earl Percy took his way;
 The child may rue that was unborn
 The hunting of that day?

220 This way of considering the misfortunes which this battle would bring upon posterity, not only on those who were born immediately after the battle and lost their fathers in it, but on those also who perished in future battles which took their rise from this quarrel of the two earls, is wonderfully beautiful, and conformable to the way of thinking among the ancient poets.

230 Audiet pugnās vitio parentum
 rara juvenus. Horace

[fewer by fatherly fault, the youth shall hear of battles]

What can be more sounding and poetical, or resemble more the majestic simplicity of the Ancients, than the following stanzas?

235 The stout Earl of Northumberland
 A vow to God did make,
 His pleasure in the Scottish woods
 Three summer's days to take.

240 With fifteen hundred bowmen bold,
 All chosen men of might,
 Who knew full well, in time of need,
 To aim their shafts aright.

The hounds ran swiftly through the woods
 The nimble deer to take,
 And with their cries the hills and dales
 An echo shrill did make.

245 ... Vocat ingenti clamore Cithaeron

Taygetique canes, domitrixque Epidaurus equorum:
 et vox assensu nemorum ingeminata remugit

[Virgil: *Georgics*, 3]

250 [Cithaeron calls loudly, and the hounds of Taygetus, and Epidaurus, tamer of horses: and the call re-echoes, doubled by the responding groves.]

Lo, yonder doth Earl Douglas come,
 His men in armour bright;
 Full twenty hundred Scottish spears,
 All marching in our sight.

255 All men of pleasant Tivdale,
 Fast by the River Tweed, etc.

260 The country of the Scotch warriors described in these two last verses, has a fine romantic situation, and affords a couple of smooth words for verse. If the reader compares the foregoing six lines of the song with the following Latin verses, he will see how much they are written in the spirit of Virgil.

Adversi campo apparent ... [quotes from *Aeneid*; transl. here by Dryden: 11, 605-6; 7. 682-4, 712-15:

265 Advancing in a line, they couch their spears;
 And less and less the middle space appears.

His own Praeneste sends a chosen band,
 With those who plough Saturnia's Sabine land:
 Besides the succour which cold Anien yields,
 The rocks of Hernicus, and dewy fields.

270 Besides a band

That followed from Velinum's dewy land:
 And Amitemian troops, of mighty fame,
 And mountaineers, that from Severus came.
 275 And from the craggy cliffs of Tetrica,
 And those where yellow Tiber takes his way,
 And where Himella's wanton waters play.
 Casperia sends her arms, with those that lie
 By Fabaris, and fruitful Foruli.]

280 But to proceed.

Earl Douglas on a milk-white steed,
 Most like a baron bold,
 Rode foremost of the company,
 Whose armour shone like gold.

285 Turnus ut antevolans tardum precesserat agmen, etc
Vidisti, quo Turnus equo, quibus ibat in armis
aureus. . . .

[*Aeneid*, 9. 47, 269-70:

290 The fiery Turnus flew before the rest.
Thou saw'st the courser by proud Turnus pressed. Dryden]

Our English archers bent their bows,
Their hearts were good and true;
At the first flight of arrows sent,
Full threescore Scots they slew.

295 They closed full fast on every side,
No slackness there was found;
And many a gallant gentleman
Lay gasping on the ground.

300 With that there came an arrow keen
Out of an English bow,
Which struck Earl Douglas to the heart
A deep and deadly blow.

Aeneas was wounded after the same manner by an unknown hand in
the midst of a parley.

305 Has inter voces, media inter talia verba,
ecce viro stridens alis allapsa sagitta est,
incertum qua pulsa manu. . . .

[*Aeneid*, 12, 318-20:

310 Thus while he spoke, unmindful of defence,
A winged arrow struck the pious prince.
But whether from some human hand it came,
Or hostile god, is left unknown by fame. Dryden]

315 But of all the descriptive parts of this song, there are none more beautiful
than the four following stanzas, which have a great force and spirit in
them, and are filled with very natural circumstances. The thought in
the third stanza was never touched by any other poet, and is such an
one as would have shined in Homer or in Virgil.

320 So thus did both these nobles die
Whose courage none could stain;
An English archer then perceived
The noble Earl was slain.

He had a bow bent in his hand,
Made of a trusty tree,

325 An arrow of a cloth-yard long
Unto the head drew he.

Against Sir Hugh Montgomery
So right his shaft he set,
The grey-goose wing that was thereon
In his heart-blood was wet.

330 This fight did last from break of day
Till setting of the sun.
For when they rung the evening bell
The battle scarce was done.

335 One may observe likewise, that in the catalogue of the slain the author
has followed the example of the greatest ancient poets, not only in
giving a long list of the dead, but by diversifying it with little characters
of particular persons.

340 And with Earl Douglas there was slain
Sir Hugh Montgomery,
Sir Charles Carrel, that from the field
One foot would never fly:

345 Sir Charles Murrel of Ratcliff too,
His sister's son was he,
Sir David Lamb, so well esteemed,
Yet saved could not be.

The familiar sound in these names destroys the majesty of the descrip-
tion; for this reason I do not mention this part of the poem but to show
the natural cast of thought which appears in it, as the two last verses
look almost like a translation of Virgil.

350 . . . Cadit et Ripheus justissimus unus
qui fuit in Teucris et servantissimus aequi,
diis aliter visum est. . . .

[*Aeneid*, 2. 426-8:

355 Then Ripheus followed, in th' unequal fight;
Just of his word, observant of the right;
Heaven thought not so. Dryden]

In the catalogue of the English who fell, Witherington's behaviour is in
the same manner particularised very artfully, as the reader is prepared
for it by that account which is given of him in the beginning of the
battle: though I am satisfied your little buffoon readers (who have seen
that passage ridiculed in *Hudibras*)[†] will not be able to take the beauty

of it: for which reason I dare not so much as quote it.

Then stepped a gallant squire forth,
 Witherington was his name,
 Who said, I would not have it told
 To Henry our King for shame,
 That e'er my Captain fought on foot
 And I stood looking on.

We meet with the same heroic sentiment in Virgil.

Non pudet, O Rutuli, cunctis pro talibus unam
 obiectare animam? numerone an viribus aequi
 non sumus? . . .

[*Aeneid*. 12, 229–31:

For shame, Rutulians, can you bear the sight,
 Of one exposed for all, in single fight?
 Can we, before the face of Heaven, confess
 Our courage colder, or our numbers less? Dryden]

What can be more natural or more moving, than the circumstances in
 which he describes the behaviour of those women who had lost their
 husbands on this fatal day?

Next day did many widows come
 Their husbands to bewail,
 They washed their wounds in brinish tears,
 But all would not prevail.
 Their bodies bathed in purple blood,
 They bore with them away;
 They kissed them dead a thousand times,
 When they were clad in clay.

Thus we see how the thoughts of this poem, which naturally arise from
 the subject, are always simple, and sometimes exquisitely noble; that
 the language is often very sounding, and that the whole is written with
 a true poetical spirit.

If this song had been written in the Gothic manner, which is the
 delight of all our little wits, whether writers or readers, it would not
 have hit the taste of so many ages, and have pleased the readers of all
 ranks and conditions. I shall only beg pardon for such a profusion of
 Latin quotations; which I should not have made use of, but that I feared
 my own judgement would have looked too singular on such a subject,
 had not I supported it by the practice and authority of Virgil.

John Gay 1685–1732

A native of Barnstaple, Gay first made his name as a poet: *The Shepherd's Week* (1714) is a series of modern pastorals ironically based on classical models; *Trivia* (1716) offers sketches of London street life. A member of the Scriblerus group of Tory satirists, he collaborated with Pope and Arbuthnot in the comedy *Three Hours after Marriage* (1717), and was dear to them and to Swift, who gave a hint for his 'Newgate pastoral' *The Beggar's Opera* (1728); this combines well-known tunes, literary parody, satire of Italian opera, and an ironic reflection of Walpole's political corruption in the world of thieves. A huge success, it is still performed, as is the Brecht–Weill modern adaptation, *The Threepenny Opera*. Performance of the sequel, *Polly*, was banned by the Lord Chamberlain. Gay also wrote librettos for musical works, notably Handel's *Acis and Galatea*. His lively verse *Fables* appeared in 1727 and 1738. His persistent financial difficulties were partly relieved by the Duke and Duchess of Queensberry. Much of Gay's best work depends on playing off varying levels of subject-matter and style: Polly's romantic notions are set in a thieves' world which yet parallels the 'normal'.

THE BEGGAR'S OPERA

Act I

Scene, Peachum's house.
Peachum sitting at a table with a large book
of accounts before him.

AIR I, *An Old Woman Clothed in Gray, etc.*

PEACHUM.

Through all the employments of life
 Each neighbour abuses his brother;
 Whore and rogue they call husband and wife;
 All professions be-rogue one another.
 The priest calls the lawyer a cheat;
 The lawyer be-knaves the divine;

And the statesman, because he's so great,
Thinks his trade as honest as mine.

10 A lawyer is an honest employment; so is mine. Like me too he acts in a double capacity,[†] both against rogues and for 'em; for 'tis but fitting that we should protect and encourage cheats, since we live by them.

Enter Filch.

FILCH. Sir, Black Moll hath sent word her trial comes on in the afternoon, and she hopes you will order matters so as to bring her off.

PEACHUM.

15 Why, she may plead her belly[†] at worst; to my knowledge she hath taken care of that security. But as the wench is very active and industrious, you may satisfy her that I'll soften the evidence.

FILCH.

Tom Gagg, sir, is found guilty.

PEACHUM.

20 A lazy dog! When I took him the time before, I told him what he would come to if he did not mend his hand. This is death without reprieve. I may venture to book him. (*Writes.*) 'For Tom Gagg, forty pounds.' – Let Betty Sly know that I'll save her from transportation,[†] for I can get more by her staying in England.

FILCH.

Betty hath brought more goods into our lock to-year than any five of the gang; and in truth, 'tis a pity to lose so good a customer.

PEACHUM.

25 If none of the gang take her off, she may, in the common course of business, live a twelvemonth longer. I love to let women scape. A good sportsman always lets the hen partridges fly, because the breed of the game depends upon them. Besides, here the law allows us no reward; there is nothing to be got by the death of women, except our wives.

FILCH.

Without dispute, she is a fine woman. 'Twas to her I was obliged for my education, and (to say a bold word) she hath trained up more young fellows to the business than the gaming table.

PEACHUM.

35 Truly, Filch, thy observation is right. We and the surgeons are more beholden to women than all the professions besides.

double capacity Peachum receives stolen goods, but also betrays (impeaches) criminals for reward
her belly pregnant women were not hanged
transportation to the prison colonies

AIR II, *The Bonny Gray-Eyed Morn, etc.*

FILCH.

'Tis woman that seduces all mankind,
By her we first were taught the wheedling arts;
Her very eyes can cheat; when most she's kind,
She tricks us of our money with our hearts.

40 For her, like wolves by night, we roam for prey,
And practice every fraud to bribe her charms;
For suits of love, like law, are won by pay,
And beauty must be fee'd into our arms.

PEACHUM.

45 But make haste to Newgate,[†] boy, and let my friends know what I intend; for I love to make them easy one way or other.

FILCH.

50 When a gentleman is long kept in suspense, penitence may break his spirit ever after. Besides, certainty gives a man a good air upon his trial, and makes him risk another without fear or scruple. But I'll away, for 'tis a pleasure to be the messenger of comfort to friends in affliction. [*Exit*]

PEACHUM.

55 But 'tis now high time to look about me for a decent execution against next sessions. I hate a lazy rogue, by whom one can get nothing till he is hanged. A register of the gang. (*Reading.*) 'Crook-fingered Jack.' A year and a half in the service. Let me see how much the stock owes to his industry: one, two, three, four, five gold watches, and seven silver ones. A mighty clean-handed fellow! Sixteen snuffboxes, five of them of true gold. Six dozen of handkerchiefs, four silver-hilted swords, half a dozen of shirts, three tie-periwigs, and a piece of broadcloth. Considering these are only the fruits of his leisure hours, I don't know a prettier fellow, for no man alive hath a more engaging presence of mind upon the road. – 'Wat Dreary, alias Brown Will,' an irregular dog, who hath an underhand way of disposing of his goods. I'll try him only for a sessions or two longer upon his good behaviour. – 'Harry Paddington,' a poor petty-larceny rascal, without the least genius; that fellow, though he were to live these six months, will never come to the gallows with any credit. –

60
65
70 'Slippery Sam'; he goes off the next sessions,[†] for the villain hath the impudence to have views of following his trade as a tailor, which he calls an honest employment. – 'Matt of the Mint'; listed not above a month ago, a promising sturdy fellow, and diligent in his way; somewhat too bold and hasty, and may raise good contributions on the public, if he does not cut himself short by murder. – 'Tom

Newgate prison, where they await trial
sessions regular court sittings

Tipple', a guzzling, soaking sot, who is always too drunk to stand himself, or to make others stand. A cart[†] is absolutely necessary for him. — 'Robin of Bagshot, alias Gorgon, alias Bluff Bob, alias Carbuncle, alias Bob Booty.'[†]

Enter Mrs Peachum.

MRS PEACHUM.

What of Bob Booty, husband? I hope nothing bad hath betided him. You know, my dear, he's a favourite customer of mine. 'Twas he made me a present of this ring.

PEACHUM.

I have set his name down in the black-list, that's all, my dear; he spends his life among women, and as soon as his money is gone, one or other of the ladies will hang him for the reward, and there's forty pound lost to us forever.

MRS PEACHUM.

You know, my dear, I never meddle in matters of death; I always leave those affairs to you. Women indeed are bitter bad judges in these cases, for they are so partial to the brave that they think every man handsome who is going to the camp or the gallows.

AIR III, *Cold and Raw*, etc.

If any wench Venus's girdle wear,[†]

Though she be never so ugly,

Lilies and roses will quickly appear,

And her face look wondrous smugly.

Beneath the left ear so fit but a cord

(A rope so charming a zone[†] is!)

The youth in his cart hath the air of a lord,

And we cry, 'There dies an Adonis!'^{††}

But really, husband, you should not be too hardhearted, for you never had a finer, braver set of men than at present. We have not had a murder among them all, these seven months. And truly, my dear, that is a great blessing.

PEACHUM.

What a dickens is the woman always a-whimpering about murder for? No gentleman is ever looked upon the worse for killing a man in his own defence; and if business cannot be carried on without it, what would you have a gentleman do?

cart to ride to hanging
Robin of Bagshot . . . *Bob Booty* recognisable
allusions to Sir Robert Walpole, the Prime Minister

Venus's Girdle wear fall in love
zone is also a girdle
Adonis in classical mythology, fine youth
loved by Venus, but killed

MRS PEACHUM.

If I am in the wrong, my dear, you must excuse me, for nobody can help the frailty of an overscrupulous conscience.

PEACHUM.

Murder is as fashionable a crime as a man can be guilty of. How many fine gentlemen have we in Newgate every year, purely upon that article? If they have wherewithal to persuade the jury to bring it in manslaughter, what are they the worse for it? So, my dear, have done upon this subject. Was Captain Macheath here this morning, for the bank notes he left with you last week?

MRS PEACHUM.

Yes, my dear; and though the bank hath stopped[†] payment, he was so cheerful and so agreeable! Sure there is not a finer gentleman upon the road than the Captain! If he comes from Bagshot at any reasonable hour he hath promised to make one this evening with Polly, and me, and Bob Booty, at a party of quadrille.[†] Pray, my dear, is the Captain rich?

PEACHUM.

The Captain keeps too good company ever to grow rich. Marybone and the chocolate houses are his undoing. The man that proposes to get money by play[†] should have the education of a fine gentleman, and be trained up to it from his youth.

MRS PEACHUM.

Really, I am sorry upon Polly's account the Captain hath not more discretion. What business hath he to keep company with lords and gentlemen? He should leave them to prey upon one another.

PEACHUM.

'Upon Polly's account!' What a plague does the woman mean?

'Upon Polly's account!'

MRS PEACHUM.

Captain Macheath is very fond of the girl.

PEACHUM.

And what then?

MRS PEACHUM.

If I have any skill in the ways of women, I am sure Polly thinks him a very pretty man.

PEACHUM.

And what then? You would not be so mad to have the wench marry him. Gamesters and highwaymen are generally very good to their whores, but they are very devils to their wives.

stopped bank 'notes' were receipts for cash play gambling took place in chocolate houses
deposits and at Marybone, several miles from the
quadrille fashionable card game City

MRS PEACHUM.

135 But if Polly should be in love, how should we help her, or how can she help herself? Poor girl, I am in the utmost concern about her.

AIR IV, *Why is Your Faithful Slave Disdained?* etc.

If love the virgin's heart invade,

How, like a moth, the simple maid

Still plays about the flame!

If soon she be not made a wife,

Her honour's singed, and then for life,

She's — what I dare not name.

PEACHUM.

145 Look ye, wife. A handsome wench in our way of business is as profitable as at the bar of a Temple[†] coffeehouse, who looks upon it as her livelihood to grant every liberty but one. You see I would indulge the girl as far as prudently we can — in anything but marriage! After that, my dear, how shall we be safe? Are we not then in her husband's power? For a husband hath the absolute power over all a wife's secrets but her own. If the girl had the discretion of a court lady, who can have a dozen young fellows at her ear without complying with one, I should not matter it; but Polly is tinder, and a spark will at once set her on a flame. Married! If the wench does not know her own profit, sure she knows her own pleasure better than to make herself a property! My daughter to me should be, like a court lady to a minister of state, a key to the whole gang. Married! If the affair is not already done, I'll terrify her from it, by the example of our neighbours.

MRS PEACHUM.

160 Mayhap, my dear, you may injure the girl. She loves to imitate the fine ladies, and she may only allow the Captain liberties in the view of interest.

PEACHUM.

But 'tis your duty, my dear, to warn the girl against her ruin, and to instruct her how to make the most of her beauty. I'll go to her this moment, and sift[†] her. In the meantime, wife, rip out the coronets and marks of these dozen of cambric handkerchiefs, for I can dispose of them this afternoon to a chap[†] in the City. [Exit.]

MRS PEACHUM.

Never was a man more out of the way in an argument than my husband. Why must our Polly, forsooth, differ from her sex, and love only her husband? And why must Polly's marriage, contrary to

Temple at the heart of the legal area
sift examine closely

chap chapman, customer

170 all observation, make her the less followed by other men? All men are thieves in love, and like a woman the better for being another's property.

AIR V, *Of All the Simple Things We Do*, etc.

A maid is like the golden ore,

Which hath guineas intrinsic in't,

Whose worth is never known before

It is tried and impressed in the mint.

A wife's like a guinea in gold,

Stamped with the name of her spouse,

Now here, now there, is bought, or is sold,

And is current in every house.

Enter Filch.

MRS PEACHUM.

185 Come hither, Filch. I am as fond of this child as though my mind misgave me he were my own. He hath as fine a hand at picking a pocket as a woman, and is as nimble-fingered as a juggler. If an unlucky session does not cut the rope of thy life, I pronounce, boy, thou wilt be a great man in history. Where was your post last night, my boy?

FILCH.

I plied at the opera, madam; and considering 'twas neither dark nor rainy, so that there was no great hurry in getting chairs and coaches, made a tolerable hand on't. These seven handkerchiefs, madam.

MRS PEACHUM.

190 Coloured ones, I see. They are of sure sale from our warehouse at Redriff[†] among the seamen.

FILCH.

And this snuffbox.

MRS PEACHUM.

Set in gold! A pretty encouragement this to a young beginner.

FILCH.

195 I had a fair tug at a charming gold watch. Pox take the tailors for making the fobs[†] so deep and narrow! It stuck by the way, and I was forced to make my escape under a coach. Really, madam, I fear I shall be cut off in the flower of my youth, so that every now and then (since I was pumped)[†] I have thoughts of taking up and going to sea.

MRS PEACHUM.

200 You should go to Hockley[†] in the Hole, and to Marybone, child, to

Redriff Rotherhithe, dock area
fobs small pockets
pumped punished at a street water-pump
Hockley area of low, violent sports

learn valour. These are the schools that have bred so many brave men. I thought, boy, by this time, thou hadst lost fear as well as shame. Poor lad! How little does he know as yet of the Old Bailey. For the first fact I'll insure thee from being hanged; and going to sea, Filch, will come time enough upon a sentence of transportation. But now, since you have nothing better to do, even go to your book, and learn your catechism; for really a man makes but an ill figure in the Ordinary's^t paper, who cannot give a satisfactory answer to his questions. But, hark you, my lad. Don't tell me a lie, for you know I hate a liar. Do you know of anything that hath passed between Captain Macheath and our Polly?

FILCH.

I beg you, madam, don't ask me; for I must either tell a lie to you or to Miss Polly; for I promised her I would not tell.

MRS PEACHUM.

But when the honour of our family is concerned –

FILCH.

I shall lead a sad life with Miss Polly if ever she come to know that I told you. Besides, I would not willingly forfeit my own honour by betraying anybody.

MRS PEACHUM.

Yonder comes my husband and Polly. Come, Filch, you shall go with me into my own room, and tell me the whole story. I'll give thee a glass of a most delicious cordial that I keep for my own drinking. [*They go out*]

Enter Peachum and Polly.

POLLY.

I know as well as any of the fine ladies how to make the most of myself and of my man too. A woman knows how to be mercenary, though she hath never been in a court or at an assembly. We have it in our natures, Papa. If I allow Captain Macheath some trifling liberties, I have this watch and other visible marks of his favour to show for it. A girl who cannot grant some things, and refuse what is most material, will make but a poor hand of her beauty, and soon be thrown upon the common.

AIR VI, What Shall I Do to Show How Much I Love Her, etc.

Virgins are like the fair flower in its lustre,

Which in the garden enamels the ground;

Near it the bees in play flutter and cluster,

And gaudy butterflies frolic around.

235

Ordinary prison chaplain; passing his reading test could mean a lighter sentence

But, when once plucked, 'tis no longer alluring,

To Covent Garden^t 'tis sent (as yet sweet),

There fades, and shrinks, and grows past all enduring,

Rots, stinks, and dies, and is trod under feet.

PEACHUM.

You know, Polly, I am not against your toying and trifling with a customer in the way of business, or to get out a secret, or so. But if I find out that you have played the fool and are married, you jade you, I'll cut your throat, hussy. Now you know my mind.

*Enter Mrs Peachum.**AIR VII, Oh London Is a Fine Town*MRS PEACHUM (*in a very great passion*).

Our Polly is a sad slut, nor heeds what we have taught her.

I wonder any man alive will ever rear a daughter!

For she must have both hoods and gowns, and hoops to swell her pride, With scarfs and stays, and gloves and lace; and she will have men beside;

And when she's dressed with care and cost, all-temptings, fine and gay, As men should serve a cowcumber,[†] she flings herself away.

Our Polly is a sad slut, etc.

You baggage! You hussy! You inconsiderate jade! Had you been hanged, it would not have vexed me, for that might have been your misfortune; but to do such a mad thing by choice! The wench is married, husband.

PEACHUM.

Married! The Captain is a bold man, and will risk anything for money; to be sure he believes her a fortune. Do you think your mother and I should have lived comfortably so long together, if ever we had been married? Baggage!

MRS PEACHUM.

I knew she was always a proud slut; and now the wench hath played the fool and married, because forsooth she would do like the gentry. Can you support the expense of a husband, hussy, in gaming, drinking, and whoring? Have you money enough to carry on the daily quarrels of man and wife about who shall squander most?

There are not many husbands and wives who can bear the charges of plaguing one another in a handsome way. If you must be married, could you introduce nobody into our family but a highwayman? Why, thou foolish jade, thou wilt be as ill used, and as much neglected, as if thou hadst married a lord!

Covent Garden market place, used by whores *cowcumber* regarded as worthless

PEACHUM.

270 Let not your anger, my dear, break through the rules of decency,
for the Captain looks upon himself in the military capacity, as a
gentleman by his profession. Besides what he hath already, I know
he is in a fair way of getting, or of dying; and both these ways, let
me tell you, are most excellent chances for a wife. Tell me, hussy,
275 are you ruined or no?

MRS PEACHUM.

With Polly's fortune, she might very well have gone off to a person
of distinction. Yes, that you might, you pouting slut!

PEACHUM.

What, is the wench dumb? Speak, or I'll make you plead by squeezing
out an answer from you. Are you really bound wife to him, or are
280 you only upon liking?
(*Pinches her.*)

POLLY (*screaming*).

Oh!

MRS PEACHUM.

How the mother is to be pitied who hath handsome daughters!
Locks, bolts, bars, and lectures of morality are nothing to them;
they break through them all. They have as much pleasure in cheating
285 a father and mother as in cheating at cards.

PEACHUM.

Why, Polly, I shall soon know if you are married, by Macheath's
keeping from our house.

AIR VIII, *Grim King of the Ghosts, etc.*

POLLY.

Can love be controlled by advice?

Will Cupid our mothers obey?

Though my heart were as frozen as ice,

At his flame 'twould have melted away.

When he kissed me so closely he pressed,

'Twas so sweet that I must have complied;

So I thought it both safest and best

To marry, for fear you should chide.

MRS PEACHUM.

Then all the hopes of our family are gone forever and ever.

PEACHUM.

And Macheath may hang his father and mother-in-law, in hope to
get into their daughter's fortune.

POLLY

I did not marry him (as 'tis the fashion) coolly and deliberately for
honour or money. But I love him.

MRS PEACHUM.

Love him! Worse and worse! I thought the girl had been better bred.
Oh husband, husband! Her folly makes me mad! My head swims!

Faints.

I'm distracted! I can't support myself. — Oh!

PEACHUM.

See, wench, to what a condition you have reduced your poor mother.
A glass of cordial, this instant. How the poor woman takes it
305 to heart. Ah, hussy, now this is the only comfort your mother has
left.

POLLY.

Give her another glass, sir; my mama drinks double the quantity
whenever she is out of order. This, you see, fetches her.

MRS PEACHUM.

The girl shows such a readiness, and so much concern, that I could
almost find in my heart to forgive her.

AIR IX, *Oh Jenny, Oh Jenny, Where Hast Thou Been*

Oh Polly, you might have toyed and kissed.

By keeping men off, you keep them on.

POLLY.

But he so teased me,

And he so pleased me,

What I did, you must have done.

MRS PEACHUM.

Not with a highwayman. You sorry slut!

PEACHUM.

A word with you, wife. 'Tis no new thing for a wench to take man
without consent of parents. You know 'tis the frailty of woman, my
320 dear.

MRS PEACHUM.

Yes, indeed, the sex is frail. But the first time a woman is frail, she
should be somewhat nice! methinks, for then or never is the time
to make her fortune. After that, she hath nothing to do but to
guard herself from being found out, and she may do what she
325 pleases.

PEACHUM.

Make yourself a little easy; I have a thought shall soon set all matters
again to rights. Why so melancholy, Polly? Since what is done cannot
be undone, we must all endeavour to make the best of it.

MRS PEACHUM.

Well, Polly, as far as one woman can forgive another, I forgive thee.
Your father is too fond of you, hussy.

330

POLLY.

Then all my sorrows are at an end.

MRS PEACHUM.

A mighty likely speech in troth, for a wench who is just married!

nice fastidious

AIR X, *Thomas, I Cannot, etc.*

POLLY.

I, like a ship in storms, was tossed;
Yet afraid to put in to land;
For seized in the port the vessel's lost
Whose treasure is contraband.

The waves are laid,
My duty's paid.

Oh joy beyond expression!

Thus, safe ashore,

I ask no more,

My all is in my possession.

PEACHUM.

I hear customers in t'other room. Go, talk with 'em, Polly, but come to us again as soon as they are gone. But hark ye, child: If 'tis the gentleman^t who was here yesterday about the repeating watch, say you believe we can't get intelligence of it till tomorrow. For I lent it to Suky Straddle, to make a figure with it tonight at a tavern in Drury Lane. If t'other gentleman calls for the silver-hilted sword, you know Beetle-Browed Jemmy hath it on; and he doth not come from Tunbridge till Tuesday night, so that it cannot be had till then.

[Exit Polly.]

PEACHUM.

Dear wife, be a little pacified. Don't let your passion run away with your senses. Polly, I grant you, hath done a rash thing.

MRS PEACHUM.

If she had had only an intrigue with the fellow, why the very best families have excused and huddled up a frailty of that sort. 'Tis marriage, husband, that makes it a blemish.

PEACHUM.

But money, wife, is the true fuller's earth for reputations; there is not a spot or a stain but what it can take out. A rich rogue nowadays is fit company for any gentleman; and the world, my dear, hath not such a contempt for roguery as you imagine. I tell you, wife, I can make this match turn to our advantage.

MRS PEACHUM.

I am very sensible, husband, that Captain Macheath is worth money, but I am in doubt whether he hath not two or three wives already, and then if he should die in a session or two, Polly's dower^t would come into dispute.

gentleman
watch

who offers a reward for his stolen

dower

a widow's material support (jointure)

PEACHUM.

That, indeed, is a point which ought to be considered.

AIR XI, *A Soldier and a Sailor*

A fox may steal your hens, sir,

A whore your health and pence, sir,

Your daughter rob your chest, sir,

Your wife may steal your rest, sir,

A thief your goods and plate.

But this is all but picking,

With rest, pence, chest, and chicken;

It ever was decreed, sir,

If lawyer's hand is fee'd, sir,

He steals your whole estate.

The lawyers are bitter enemies to those in our way. They don't care that anybody should get a clandestine livelihood but themselves.

Enter Polly.

POLLY.

'Twas only Nimming Ned. He brought in a damask window curtain, a hoop-petticoat, a pair of silver candlesticks, a periwig, and one silk stocking, from the fire that happened last night.

PEACHUM.

There is not a fellow that is cleverer in his way, and saves more goods out of the fire, than Ned. But now, Polly, to your affair; for matters must not be left as they are. You are married then, it seems?

POLLY.

Yes, sir.

PEACHUM.

And how do you propose to live, child?

POLLY.

Like other women, sir, upon the industry of my husband.

MRS PEACHUM.

What, is the wench turned fool? A highwayman's wife, like a soldier's, hath as little of his pay as of his company.

PEACHUM.

And had not you the common views of a gentlewoman in your marriage, Polly?

POLLY.

I don't know what you mean, sir.

PEACHUM.

Of a jointure, and of being a widow.

POLLY.

But I love him, sir. How then could I have thoughts of parting with him?

PEACHUM.

Parting with him! Why, that is the whole scheme and intention of all marriage articles. The comfortable estate of widowhood is the only hope that keeps up a wife's spirits. Where is the woman who would scruple to be a wife, if she had it in her power to be a widow whenever she pleased? If you have any views of this sort, Polly, I shall think the match not so very unreasonable.

POLLY.

How I dread to hear your advice! Yet I must beg you to explain yourself.

PEACHUM.

Secure what he hath got, have him peached[†] the next sessions, and then at once you are made a rich widow.

405

POLLY.

What, murder the man I love! The blood runs cold at my heart with the very thought of it.

PEACHUM.

Fie, Polly! What hath murder to do in the affair? Since the thing sooner or later must happen, I dare say, the Captain himself would like that we should get the reward for his death sooner than a stranger. Why, Polly, the Captain knows that as 'tis his employment to rob, so 'tis ours to take robbers. Every man in his business. So that there is no malice in the case.

410

MRS PEACHUM.

Ay, husband, now you have nicked[†] the matter. To have him peached is the only thing could ever make me forgive her.

415

AIR XII, *Now Ponder Well, Ye Parents Dear*

POLLY.

Oh, ponder well! Be not severe;
So save a wretched wife!

For on the rope that hangs my dear

Depends[†] poor Polly's life.

MRS PEACHUM.

But your duty to your parents, hussy, obliges you to hang him. What would many a wife give for such an opportunity.

420

POLLY.

What is a jointure, what is widowhood to me? I know my heart. I cannot survive him.

AIR XIII, *Le Printemps Rappellex aux Armes* [Spring Calls to Arms]

The turtle[†] thus with plaintive crying,

Her lover dying,

425

peached informed on
nicked hit exactly

depends (Latin) hangs
turtle dove

The turtle thus with plaintive crying

Laments her dove.

Down she drops quite spent with sighing

Paired in death, as paired in love.

Thus, sir, it will happen to your poor Polly.

MRS PEACHUM.

What, is the fool in love in earnest then? I hate thee for being particular. Why, wench, thou art a shame to thy very sex.

POLLY.

But hear me, mother. If you ever loved —

MRS PEACHUM.

Those cursed playbooks she reads have been her ruin. One word more, hussy, and I shall knock your brains out, if you have any.

435

PEACHUM.

Keep out of the way, Polly, for fear of mischief, and consider of what is proposed to you.

MRS PEACHUM.

Away, hussy. Hang your husband, and be dutiful.

[Exit Polly to a hiding place listening]

MRS PEACHUM.

The thing, husband, must and shall be done. For the sake of intelligence we must take other measures, and have him peached the next session without her consent. If she will not know her duty, we know ours.

440

PEACHUM.

But really, my dear, it grieves one's heart to take off a great man. When I consider his personal bravery, his fine stratagem, how much we have already got by him, and how much more we may get, methinks I can't find in my heart to have a hand in his death. I wish you could have made Polly undertake it.

445

MRS PEACHUM.

But in a case of necessity — our own lives are in danger.

PEACHUM.

Then, indeed, we must comply with the customs of the world, and make gratitude give way to interest. He shall be taken off.

450

MRS PEACHUM.

I'll undertake to manage Polly.

PEACHUM.

And I'll prepare matters for the Old Bailey.

[they go out]

POLLY.

Now I'm a wretch, indeed. Methinks I see him already in the cart, sweeter and more lovely than the nosegay[†] in his hand. I hear the

nosegay bunch of flowers

455 crowd extolling his resolution and intrepidity. What volleys of sighs
are sent from the windows of Holborn¹ that so comely a youth
should be brought to disgrace. I see him at the tree! The whole circle
are in tears! Even butchers weep! Jack Ketch himself hesitates to
perform his duty, and would be glad to lose his fee by a reprieve.
460 What then will become of Polly? — As yet I may inform him of their
design, and aid him in his escape. It shall be so. But then he flies,
absents himself, and I bar myself from his dear, dear conversation.
That too will distract me. If he keep out of the way, my papa and
mama may in time relent, and we may be happy. If he stays, he is
465 hanged, and then he is lost forever! He intended to lie concealed in
my room till the dusk of the evening. If they are abroad, I'll this
instant let him out, lest some accident should prevent him.

Exit, and returns with Macheath.

AIR XIV, *Pretty Parrot, Say*

MACHEATH.
Pretty Polly, say,
When I was away,
470 Did your fancy never stray
To some newer lover?
Without disguise,
Heaving sighs,
Doting eyes,
475 My constant heart discover.
Fondly let me loll!
Oh pretty, pretty Poll.

POLLY.
And are you as fond as ever, my dear?

MACHEATH.

480 Suspect my honour, my courage, suspect anything but my love. May
my pistols miss fire, and my mare slip her shoulder while I am
pursued, if I ever forsake thee.

POLLY.

Nay, my dear, I have no reason to doubt you, for I find in the
romance you lent me, none of the great heroes were ever false in
love.

AIR XV, *Pray, Fair One, Be Kind*

485 MACHEATH.
My heart was so free,
It roved like the bee,
Till Polly my passion requited;

490 POLLY.
I sipped each flower,
I changed every hour,
But here every flower is united.

Were you sentenced to transportation, sure, my dear, you could not
leave me behind you, could you?

MACHEATH.

495 Is there any power, any force that could tear me from thee? You
might sooner tear a pension out of the hands of a courtier, a fee
from a lawyer, a pretty woman from a looking glass, or any woman
from quadrille. But to tear me from thee is impossible.

AIR XVI, *Over the Hills and Far Away*

500 POLLY.
Were I laid on Greenland's coast,
And in my arms embraced my lass:
Warm amidst eternal frost,
Too soon the half year's night would pass.
Were I sold¹ on Indian soil

Soon as the burning day was closed,
I could mock the sultry toil,
When on my charmer's breast reposed.

505 MACHEATH.
And I would love you all the day,
POLLY.
Every night would kiss and play,
MACHEATH.
If with me you'd fondly stray
POLLY.
Over the hills and far away.

510 Yes, I would go with thee. But oh, how shall I speak it? I must be
torn from thee. We must part.

MACHEATH.

How? Part?

POLLY.

We must, we must. My papa and mama are set against thy life. They
now, even now, are in search after thee. They are preparing evidence
against thee. Thy life depends upon a moment.

AIR XVII, *Gin Thou Wert Mine Aun Thing*

520 POLLY.
Oh what pain it is to part!
Can I leave thee, can I leave thee?
Oh what pain it is to part!
Can thy Polly ever leave thee?
But lest death my love should thwart,
And bring thee to the fatal cart,

Holborn on the route from Newgate to
Tyburn gallows

sold as a slave

Thus I tear thee from my bleeding heart!
Fly hence, and let me leave thee.

One kiss and then – one kiss – begone – farewell.

MACHEATH.

525 My hand, my heart, my dear, is so riveted to thine, that I cannot
unloose my hold.

POLLY.

But my papa may intercept thee, and then I should lose the very
glimmering of hope. A few weeks, perhaps, may reconcile us all.
Shall thy Polly hear from thee?

MACHEATH.

530 Must I then go?

POLLY.

And will not absence change your love?

MACHEATH.

If you doubt it, let me stay, and be hanged.

POLLY.

Oh how I fear! How I tremble! Go, but when safety will give you
leave, you will be sure to see me again; for till then Polly is wretched.

[Parting, and looking back at each other with fondness; he at one
door, she at the other.]

AIR XVIII, *Oh, the Broom, etc.*

535 MACHEATH.

The miser thus a shilling sees,
Which he's obliged to pay,
With sighs resigns it by degrees,
And fears 'tis gone for aye.

POLLY.

The boy thus, when his sparrow's flown,
The bird in silence eyes;
But soon as out of sight 'tis gone,
Whines, whimpers, sobs, and cries. [both go out]
[End of the First Act.]

540

1728

Alexander Pope

1688–1744

After a retired childhood in Windsor Forest, under the double disability of retarded growth from chronic ill-health and of Catholic parentage in an age of civil penalties, Pope showed precocious talent in his *Pastorals* (1709) and *Essay on Criticism* (1711); *The Rape of the Lock* (1714, enlarged version) placed him at the forefront of contemporary poetry, while he became associated with the wits and satirists of the Scriblerus Club (Gay, Swift, Arbuthnot). His translation of Homer's *Iliad* (1715–20) established his financial security, permitting his long residence at Twickenham (then well outside London), where by the river he built up his famous garden and grotto, which show his interest in the visual arts. Despite his friendships with literary men, and with Martha Blount and Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (see p. 256), his growing fame and his collaboration in the Scriblerian ridicule of bad writing increasingly involved him in literary warfare: Theobald criticised his edition of Shakespeare and was enthroned in *The Dunciad* (1728; revised in four books with C. Cibber as hero, 1743). Partly under the influence of the former politician Henry St John, Viscount Bolingbroke, Pope produced *An Essay on Man* (1733–4); the four *Moral Essays* (1731–5) are epistles to friends on appropriate topics. Also in the 1730s, he cultivated *Imitations of Horace*, in which he fruitfully exploits the parallels between his situation and the Roman satirist's, to criticise the decay of morality and literature, opposing the life of retired contemplation and friendship to the money-grubbing and corruption of business and public life: the *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* stands as the prologue to these satires.

Pope laboured to refine the verse techniques inherited from Dryden, and attempted the traditional genres from pastoral to epic (mock, in his case). His great satires transcend personal animosity in their traditional concern to expose deviation from sound social and moral values. The romantic reaction against the heroic couplet reached its apogee in Matthew Arnold's verdict (1880) that 'Dryden and Pope are not classics of our poetry, they are classics of our prose'.

From AN ESSAY ON CRITICISM

[Poetic Technique][†]

versification

- But most by numbers* judge a poet's song,
And smooth or rough, with them, is right or wrong;
In the bright Muse though thousand charms conspire,
Her voice is all these tuneful fools admire,
Who haunt Parnassus[†] but to please their ear,
Not mend their minds; as some to church repair,
Not for the doctrine, but the music there.
These *equal syllables* alone require,
Though oft the ear the *open vowels*[†] tire,
While *expletives*[†] their feeble aid *do* join,
And ten low words oft creep in one dull line,
While they ring round the same unvaried chimes,
With sure returns of still expected rhymes.
Where'er you find the *cooling western breeze*,
In the next line, it *whispers through the trees*;
If *crystal streams with pleasing murmurs creep*,
The reader's threatened (not in vain) with sleep.
Then, at the last and only couplet fraught
With some unmeaning thing they call a thought,
A *needless Alexandrine*[†] ends the song,
[That, like a wounded snake, drags its slow length along.
Leave such to tune their own dull rhymes, and know
What's *roundly smooth*, or *linguishingly slow*;
And praise the *easy vigour* of a line,
Where Denham's strength and Waller's[†] sweetness join.
True ease in writing comes from art, not chance,
As those move easiest who have learned to dance.
'Tis not enough no harshness gives offence,
The sound must seem an echo to the sense.
Soft is the strain when *Zephyr*[†] gently blows,
And the *smooth stream* in *smoother numbers* flows;
But when loud surges lash the sounding shore,
The *hoarse, rough verse* should like the torrent roar.

[*Poetic Technique*] Pope here imitates tricks of feeble verse-writing and contrasts his own virtuoso repertoire. His original italics are partly retained to emphasise his effects
Parnassus Mount of the Muses in Greece
open vowels as the 'o' sounds here
expletives words merely padding out the line, as *do*
Alexandrine a line of six, not the usual five, iambic feet, e.g. 1.357
Denham's . . . Waller's Sir John Denham (1615–69) and Edmund Waller (1606–87), praised by Dryden for their metrical reforms
Zephyr west wind; the easy movement of 11.366–7 contrasts with 368–71

- 370 When Ajax[†] strives, some rock's vast weight to throw,
The line too *labours*, and the words move *slow*:
Not so, when swift Camilla[†] scours the plain,
Flies o'er th' unbending corn, and skims along the main. . . .

c. 1709

1711

From WINDSOR FOREST[†]

[Order in Variety]

- The groves of Eden, vanished now so long,
Live in description, and look green in song:
These, were my breast inspired with equal flame,
Like them in beauty, should be like in fame.
Here hills and vales, the woodland and the plain,
Here earth and water seem to strive again,
Not chaos-like together crushed and bruised,
But, as the world, harmoniously confused:
Where order in variety we see,
And where, though all things differ, all agree.
Here waving groves a chequered scene display,
And part admit and part exclude the day;
As some coy nymph her lover's warm address
Nor quite indulges, nor can quite repress.
There, interspersed in lawns and opening glades,
Thin trees arise that shun each other's shades.
Here in full light the russet plains extend;
There wrapped in clouds the bluish hills ascend:
Even the wild heath displays her purple dyes,
And midst the desert fruitful fields arise,
That, crowned with tufted trees and springing corn,
Like verdant isles the sable waste adorn.
Let India boast her plants, nor envy we
The weeping amber[†] or the balmy tree,

Ajax Greek hero in Trojan War
Camilla Princess in *Aeneid*, VII.808, light of foot
Windsor Forest Pope, brought up in the Forest, exploits its royal associations to chart the growth of harmony and prosperity, illustrating the aesthetic principle of 'order in variety': His descriptions blend terms of nature and art ('dye', 'painted')
amber like balm, a valuable resin, imported in ships of English oak, on which colonial power depended

While by our oaks the precious loads are borne,
And realms commanded which those trees adorn.
Not proud Olympus[†] yields a nobler sight,
Though gods assembled grace his towering height,
Than what more humble mountains offer here,
Where, in their blessings, all those gods appear.
See Pan with flocks, with fruits Pomona crowned,
Here blushing Flora paints th' enamelled ground,[†]
Here Ceres[†] gifts in waving prospect stand,
And nodding tempt the joyful reaper's hand;
Rich Industry sits smiling on the plains,
And peace and plenty tell, a Stuart[†] reigns. . . .

[*Man's Victims*]

See! from the brake* the whirring pheasant springs,
And mounts exulting on triumphant wings;
Short is his joy! he feels the fiery wound,
Flutters in blood, and panting beats the ground.
Ah! what avail his glossy, varying dyes,
His purple crest, and scarlet-circled eyes,
The vivid green his shining plumes unfold,
His painted wings, and breast that flames with gold?
Nor yet, when moist Arcturus[†] clouds the sky,
The woods and fields their pleasing toils deny.
To plains with well-breathed beagles we repair,
And trace the mazes of the circling hare.
(Beasts, urged by us, their fellow beasts pursue,
And learn of man each other to undo.)
With slaughtering guns th' unwearyed fowler roves,
When frosts have whitened all the naked groves;
Where doves in flocks the leafless trees o'ershade,
And lonely woodcocks haunt the watery glade.
He lifts the tube,[†] and levels with his eye;
Strait a short thunder breaks the frozen sky.
Oft as in airy rings they skim the heath,
The clamorous lapwings feel the leaden death:

Olympus Mount of the gods, in Greece
Flora . . . ground goddess of flowers, which
adorn the 'ground', surface prepared for
painting
Ceres goddess of corn
a Stuart Queen Anne (reigned 1702–14), the
last Stuart monarch
Arcturus star in the constellation of the Great
Bear
tube barrel of gun, firing lead shot

Oft as the mounting larks their notes prepare,
They fall, and leave their little lives in air.
In genial[†] spring, beneath the quivering shade
Where cooling vapours breathe along the mead,
The patient fisher takes his silent stand
Intent, his angle trembling in his hand;
With looks unmoved, he hopes the scaly breed,[†]
And eyes the dancing cork and bending reed.
Our plenteous streams a various race supply:
The bright-eyed perch with fins of Tyrian[†] dye,
The silver eel, in shining volumes* rolled,
The yellow carp, in scales bedropped with gold,
Swift trouts, diversified with crimson stains,
And pikes, the tyrants of the watery plains. . . .

1704 1713

THE RAPE OF THE LOCK[†]

Canto I

What dire offence[†] from amorous causes springs,
What mighty contests rise from trivial things,
I sing – This verse to Caryll, Muse! is due;
This, even Belinda may vouchsafe to view:
Slight is the subject, but not so the praise,
If she inspire, and he approve my lays.
Say what strange motive, Goddess! could compel
A well-bred lord t' assault a gentle belle?
Oh, say what stranger cause, yet unexplored,
Could make a gentle belle reject a lord?

genial pleasant, healthful
scaly breed poetic diction for fish
Tyrian a famous purple
The Rape of the Lock Pope's friend John
Caryll (l.3) hoped he might laugh away the
quarrel caused when Lord Petre cut a lock of
hair from Arabella Fermor ('Belinda'). The
two-canto version of 1712 was expanded by
the 'machinery' and further incidents into
five cantos in 1714; Clarissa's speech in

Canto V was added in 1717. The poem
continually juxtaposes the trivial modern
action with the mock-heroic manner: the
speeches, battles, descent to the underworld,
are epic in origin, with many echoes of the
Iliad, *Aeneid*, and *Paradise Lost*; but the
comparison is not entirely to the discredit of
the modern world
dire offence begins by traditional epic
statement of the subject

In tasks so bold can little men engage,
 And in soft bosoms dwells such mighty rage?
 Sol through white curtains shot a timorous ray,
 And oped those eyes that must eclipse the day;
 15 Now lapdogs give themselves the rousing shake,
 And sleepless lovers just at twelve awake:
 Thrice rung the bell, the slipper knocked the ground,
 And the pressed watch[†] returned a silver sound.
 Belinda still her downy pillow pressed,
 20 Her guardian Sylph[†] prolonged the balmy rest:
 'Twas he had summoned to her silent bed
 The morning dream that hovered o'er her head.
 A youth more glittering than a birthnight beau[†]
 (That even in slumber caused her cheek to glow)
 25 Seemed to her ear his winning lips to lay,
 And thus in whispers said, or seemed to say:
 'Fairest of mortals, thou distinguished care
 Of thousand bright inhabitants of air!
 If e'er one vision touched thy infant thought,
 30 Of all the nurse and all the priest have taught,
 Of airy elves by moonlight shadows seen,
 The silver token, and the circled green,[†]
 Or virgins visited by angel powers,
 With golden crowns and wreaths of heavenly flowers,
 35 Hear and believe! thy own importance know,
 Nor bound thy narrow views to things below.
 Some secret truths, from learned pride concealed,
 To maids alone and children are revealed:
 What though no credit doubting wits may give?
 40 The fair and innocent shall still believe.
 Know then unnumbered spirits round thee fly,
 The light militia of the lower sky;
 These, though unseen, are ever on the wings,
 Hang o'er the box,[†] and hover round the Ring.[†]
 45 Think what an equipage thou hast in air,
 And view with scorn two pages and a chair.[†]
 As now your own, our beings were of old,
 And once enclosed in woman's beauteous mould;

pressed watch it indicates each quarter-hour
by chiming
Sylph a spirit of the air (as gnomes of earth,
 nymphs of water, salamanders of fire), with
 a hint of 'guardian angel'
birthnight beau Courtier in magnificent attire
 for the sovereign's birthday
circled green marks left on grass by fairies
box in theatre
Ring fashionable circular drive in Hyde Park
chair sedan chair, for carrying passengers

50 Thence, by a soft transition, we repair
 From earthly vehicles to these of air.
 Think not, when woman's transient breath is fled,
 That all her vanities at once are dead:
 Succeeding vanities she still regards,
 And, though she plays no more, o'erlooks the cards.
 55 Her joy in gilded chariots,[†] when alive,
 And love of ombre,[†] after death survive.
 For when the fair in all their pride expire,
 To their first elements[†] their souls retire:
 The sprites of fiery termagants in flame
 60 Mount up, and take a Salamander's name.
 Soft yielding minds to water glide away,
 And sip with Nymphs their elemental tea.
 The graver prude sinks downward to a Gnome,
 In search of mischief still on earth to roam.
 65 The light coquettes in Sylphs aloft repair,
 And sport and flutter in the fields of air.
 'Know further yet; whoever fair and chaste
 Rejects mankind, is by some Sylph embraced:
 For spirits, freed from mortal laws, with ease
 70 Assume what sexes and what shapes they please.
 What guards the purity of melting maids,
 In courtly balls and midnight masquerades,
 Safe from the treacherous friend, the daring spark,[†]
 The glance by day, the whisper in the dark,
 75 When kind occasion prompts their warm desires,
 When music softens, and when dancing fires?
 'Tis but their Sylph, the wise Celestials know,
 Though Honour is the word with men below.
 'Some nymphs there are, too conscious of their face,
 80 For life predestined to the Gnomes' embrace.
 These swell their prospects and exalt their pride,
 When offers are disdained, and love denied.
 Then gay ideas crowd the vacant brain,
 While peers and dukes, and all their sweeping train,
 85 And garters,[†] stars, and coronets[†] appear,
 And in soft sounds, "your Grace" salutes their ear.
 'Tis these that early taint the female soul,
 Instruct the eyes of young coquettes to roll,

chariot pleasure carriage
ombre the card game played in Canto III
elements earth, air, fire, water: basic
 constituents of matter
spark a lively man, a lover
garters . . . coronets the externals of
 aristocratic rank

- Teach infant cheeks a bidden blush to know,
 And little hearts to flutter at a beau.
 'Oft when the world imagine women stray,
 The Sylphs through mystic mazes guide their way,
 Through all the giddy circle they pursue,
 And old impertinence expel by new.
 What tender maid but must a victim fall
 To one man's treat, but for another's ball?
 When Florio speaks, what virgin could withstand,
 If gentle Damon did not squeeze her hand?
 With varying vanities, from every part,
 They shift the moving toyshop of their heart;
 Where wigs with wigs, with sword-knots[†] sword-knots strive,
 Beaux banish beaux, and coaches coaches drive.
 This erring mortals levity may call;
 Oh blind to truth! the Sylphs contrive it all.
 'Of these am I, who thy protection claim,
 A watchful sprite, and Ariel is my name.
 Late, as I ranged the crystal wilds of air,
 In the clear mirror of thy ruling star
 I saw, alas! some dread event impend,
 Ere to the main this morning sun descend,
 But Heaven reveals not what, or how, or where:
 Warned by the Sylph, Oh pious maid, beware!
 This to disclose is all thy guardian can:
 Beware of all, but most beware of Man!
 He said; when Shock,[†] who thought she slept too long,
 Leaped up, and waked his mistress with his tongue.
 'Twas then, Belinda, if report say true,
 Thy eyes first opened on a billet-doux;
 Wounds, charms, and ardours were no sooner read,
 But all the vision vanished from thy head.
 And now, unveiled, the toilet[†] stands displayed,
 Each silver vase in mystic order laid.
 First, robed in white, the nymph intent adores,
 With head uncovered, the cosmetic powers.
 A heavenly image in the glass appears;
 To that she bends, to that her eyes she rears;
 Th' inferior priestess,[†] at her altar's side,
 Trembling begins the sacred rites of pride.

sword-knots decorative ribbons on sword hilt
Shock a shough, rough-haired lap-dog
toilet the dressing-table, an altar at which
 Belinda worships her own image. After the
 epic dream-warning, Pope parodies religious
 ritual and the arming of the hero
inferior priestess the maid, commonly called
 Betty (l.148)

- Unnumbered treasures ope at once, and here
 The various offerings of the world appear;
 From each she nicely culls with curious toil,
 And decks the goddess with the glittering spoil.
 This casket India's glowing gems unlocks,
 And all Arabia[†] breathes from yonder box.
 The tortoise here and elephant unite,
 Transformed to combs, the speckled and the white.
 Here files of pins extend their shining rows,
 Puffs, powders, patches,[†] bibles, billet-doux.
 Now awful beauty puts on all its arms;
 The fair each moment rises in her charms,
 Repairs her smiles, awakens every grace,
 And calls forth all the wonders of her face;
 Sees by degrees a purer blush arise,
 And keener lightnings quicken in her eyes.
 The busy Sylphs surround their darling care;
 These set the head, and those divide the hair,
 Some fold the sleeve, whilst others plait the gown;
 And Betty's praised for labours not her own.

Canto II

- Not with more glories, in th' ethereal plain,
 The sun first rises o'er the purpled main,
 Than, issuing forth, the rival of his beams
 Launched on the bosom of the silver Thames.
 Fair nymphs and well-dressed youths around her shone,
 But every eye was fixed on her alone.
 On her white breast a sparkling cross she wore,
 Which Jews might kiss, and infidels adore.
 Her lively looks a sprightly mind disclose,
 Quick as her eyes, and as unfixed as those:
 Favours to none, to all she smiles extends;
 Oft she rejects, but never once offends.
 Bright as the sun, her eyes the gazers strike,
 And, like the sun, they shine on all alike.
 Yet graceful ease, and sweetness void of pride,
 Might hide her faults, if belles had faults to hide:

Arabia eastern perfumes; the combs are of
 tortoise-shell and ivory
patches artificial beauty-spots

- If to her share some female errors fall,
Look on her face, and you'll forget 'em all.
This nymph, to the destruction of mankind,
Nourished two locks, which graceful hung behind
In equal curls, and well conspired to deck
With shining ringlets the smooth ivory neck.
Love in these labyrinths his slaves detains,
And mighty hearts are held in slender chains.
25 With hairy springs¹ we the birds betray,
Slight lines of hair surprise the finny prey,
Fair tresses man's imperial race ensnare,
And beauty draws us with a single hair.
Th' adventurous Baron the bright locks admired,
30 He saw, he wished, and to the prize aspired:
Resolved to win, he meditates the way,
By force to ravish, or by fraud betray;
For when success a lover's toil attends,
Few ask if fraud or force attained his ends.
35 For this, ere Phoebus rose, he had implored
Propitious Heaven, and every power adored,
But chiefly Love – to Love an altar built,
Of twelve vast French romances,[†] neatly gilt.
There lay three garters, half a pair of gloves,
40 And all the trophies of his former loves.
With tender billet-doux he lights the pyre,
And breathes three amorous sighs to raise the fire.
Then prostrate falls, and begs with ardent eyes
Soon to obtain, and long possess the prize:
45 The powers gave ear, and granted half his prayer,
The rest, the winds dispersed in empty air.
But now secure the painted vessel glides,
The sunbeams trembling on the floating tides,
While melting music steals upon the sky,
50 And softened sounds along the waters die.
Smooth flow the waves, the zephyrs gently play,
Belinda smiled, and all the world was gay.
All but the Sylph – with careful thoughts oppressed,
Th' impending woe sat heavy on his breast.
55 He summons straight his denizens of air;
The lucid squadrons round the sails repair:

springs snares (two syllables)
French romances long love stories, bound in
gold-stamped leather

- Soft o'er the shrouds aerial whispers breathe,
That seemed but zephyrs to the train beneath.
Some to the sun their insect-wings unfold,
60 Waft on the breeze, or sink in clouds of gold.
Transparent forms too fine for mortal sight,
Their fluid bodies half dissolved in light.
Loose to the wind their airy garments flew,
Thin glittering textures of the filmy dew,
Dipped in the richest tincture of the skies,
65 Where light disports in ever-mingling dyes,
While every beam new transient colours flings,
Colours that change whene'er they wave their wings.
Amid the circle, on the gilded mast,
Superior[†] by the head was Ariel placed;
His purple pinions opening to the sun,
He raised his azure wand, and thus begun:
70 'Ye Sylphs and Sylphids, to your chief give ear!
Fays, Fairies, Genii, Elves, and Daemons, hear!
Ye know the spheres and various tasks assigned
By laws eternal to th' aerial kind.
Some in the fields of purest ether play,
And bask and whiten in the blaze of day.
Some guide the course of wandering orbs on high,
80 Or roll the planets through the boundless sky.
Some less refined, beneath the moon's pale light
Pursue the stars that shoot athwart the night,
Or suck the mists in grosser air below,
Or dip their pinions in the painted bow,
85 Or brew fierce tempests on the wintry main,
Or o'er the glebe[†] distill the kindly rain.
Others on earth o'er human race preside,
Watch all their ways, and all their actions guide:
Of these the chief the care of nations own,
And guard with arms divine the British Throne.
90 'Our humbler province is to tend the fair,
Not a less pleasing, though less glorious care:
To save the powder from too rude a gale,
Nor let th' imprisoned essences exhale;
95 To draw fresh colours from the vernal flowers,
To steal from rainbows e'er they drop in showers

superior taller: Ariel's attributes and speech
again suggest the epic hero
glebe cultivated land

A brighter wash; to curl their waving hairs,
 Assist their blushes, and inspire their airs;
 Nay oft, in dreams invention we bestow,
 To change a frounce, or add a furbelow.[†]
 'This day, black omens threat the brightest fair
 That e'er deserved a watchful spirit's care;
 Some dire disaster, or by force or slight,
 But what, or where, the Fates have wrapped in night:
 Whether the nymph shall break Diana's law,[†]
 Or some frail china jar receive a flaw,
 Or stain her honour or her new brocade,
 Forget her prayers, or miss a masquerade,
 Or lose her heart, or necklace, at a ball;
 Or whether Heaven has doomed that Shock must fall.
 Haste then ye spirits! to your charge repair:
 The fluttering fan be Zephyretta's care;
 The drops[†] to thee, Brillante, we consign;
 And, Momentilla, let the watch be thine;
 Do thou, Crispissa, tend her favourite lock;
 Ariel himself shall be the guard of Shock.
 'To fifty chosen Sylphs, of special note,
 We trust th' important charge, the petticoat;
 Oft have we known that sevenfold fence to fail,
 Though stiff with hoops, and armed with ribs of whale.[†]
 Form a strong line about the silver bound,
 And guard the wide circumference around.
 'Whatever spirit, careless of his charge,
 His post neglects, or leaves the fair at large,
 Shall feel sharp vengeance soon o'ertake his sins,
 Be stopped in vials, or transfixed with pins;
 Or plunged in lakes of bitter washes lie,
 Or wedged whole ages in a bodkin's* eye;
 Gums and pomatums[†] shall his flight restrain,
 While clogged he beats his silken wings in vain;
 Or alum styptics[†] with contracting power
 Shrink his thin essence like a rivelled flower:
 Or, as Ixion[†] fixed, the wretch shall feel
 The giddy motion of the whirling mill,

furbelow ruffle on a lady's gown
Diana's law Diana was goddess of chastity
drops diamond earrings
whale petticoats were elaborately constructed
pomatums hair ointments
styptics astringents; the domestic objects
 contrast with the epic threats
Ixion mythical Greek seducer, bound in hell
 to a moving wheel

135 In fumes of burning chocolate shall glow,
 And tremble at the sea that froths below!
 He spoke; the spirits from the sails descend;
 Some, orb in orb, around the nymph extend;
 Some thread the mazy ringlets of her hair,
 Some hang upon the pendants of her ear;
 140 With beating hearts the dire event they wait,
 Anxious, and trembling for the birth of Fate.

 Canto III

 Close by those meads forever crowned with flowers,
 Where Thames with pride surveys his rising towers,
 There stands a structure[†] of majestic frame,
 Which from the neighbouring Hampton takes its name.
 5 Here Britain's statesmen oft the fall foredoom
 Of foreign tyrants, and of nymphs at home;
 Here thou, great Anna! whom three realms obey,
 Dost sometimes counsel take – and sometimes tea.[†]
 10 Hither the heroes and the nymphs resort,
 To taste awhile the pleasures of a court;
 In various talk th' instructive hours they passed,
 Who gave the ball, or paid the visit last;
 One speaks the glory of the British Queen,
 And one describes a charming Indian screen;
 15 A third interprets motions, looks, and eyes;
 At every word a reputation dies.
 Snuff, or the fan, supply each pause of chat,
 With singing, laughing, ogling, and all that.
 Meanwhile, declining from the noon of day,
 20 The sun obliquely shoots his burning ray;
 The hungry judges soon the sentence sign,
 And wretches hang that jurymen may dine;
 The merchant from th' Exchange returns in peace,
 And the long labours of the toilet cease.
 25 Belinda now, whom thirst of fame invites,
 Burns to encounter two adventurous knights,
 At ombre[†] singly to decide their doom,

structure Hampton Court Palace, upriver
 from London; Queen Anne ruled until 1714
tea pronounced 'tay'
ombre . . . *Codille* ombre, presented as an
 epic battle, a game for three players with
 nine cards each. The *Matadores* (highest
 cards) are *Spadillo* (ace of spades), *Manillo*
 (two of spades), *Basto* (ace of clubs); *Pam*
 (knave of clubs) is the highest in loo, another
 card game. The *amazon* is the warlike queen
 of spades; *Codille*: defeat

And swells her breast with conquests yet to come.

Straight the three bands prepare in arms to join,

Each band the number of the sacred nine.

Soon as she spreads her hand, th' aerial guard

Descend, and sit on each important card:

First Ariel perched upon a Matadore,[†]

Then each according to the rank they bore;

For Sylphs, yet mindful of their ancient race,

Are, as when women, wondrous fond of place.

Behold, four Kings in majesty revered,

With hoary whiskers and a forked beard;

And four fair Queens whose hands sustain a flower,

Th' expressive emblem of their softer power;

Four Knaves in garbs succinct, a trusty band,

Caps on their heads, and halberds in their hand;

And particoloured troops, a shining train,

Draw forth to combat on the velvet plain.

The skilful nymph reviews her force with care;

'Let Spades be trumps!' she said, and trumps they were.

Now move to war her sable Matadores,

In show like leaders of the swarthy Moors.

Spadillio[†] first, unconquerable lord!

Led off two captive trumps, and swept the board.

As many more Manillio[†] forced to yield,

And marched a victor from the verdant field.

Him Basto[†] followed, but his fate more hard

Gained but one trump and one plebian card.

With his broad sabre next, a chief in years,

The hoary Majesty of Spades appears,

Puts forth one manly leg, to sight revealed,

The rest his many-coloured robe concealed.

The rebel Knave, who dares his prince engage,

Proves the just victim of his royal rage.

Even mighty Pam,[†] that kings and queens o'erthrew

And mowed down armies in the fights of loo,

Sad chance of war! now destitute of aid,

Falls undistinguished by the victor Spade.

Thus far both armies to Belinda yield;

Now to the Baron fate inclines the field.

His warlike amazon[†] her host invades,

Th' imperial consort of the crown of Spades.

The Club's black tyrant first her victim died,

Spite of his haughty mien and barbarous pride:

What boots the regal circle on his head,

His giant limbs in state unwieldy spread?

That long behind he trails his pompous robe,

And of all monarchs only grasps the globe?

75 The Baron now his Diamonds pours apace;

Th' embroidered King who shows but half his face,

And his refulgent Queen, with powers combined,

Of broken troops an easy conquest find.

Clubs, Diamonds, Hearts, in wild disorder seen,

With throngs promiscuous strew the level green.

80 Thus when dispersed a routed army runs,

Of Asia's troops, and Afric's sable sons,

With like confusion different nations fly,

Of various habit, and of various dye,

85 The pierced battalions disunited fall

In heaps on heaps; one fate o'erwhelms them all.

The Knave of Diamonds tries his wily arts,

And wins (oh shameful chance!) the Queen of Hearts.

At this, the blood the virgin's cheek forsook,

90 A livid paleness spreads o'er all her look;

She sees, and trembles at th' approaching ill,

Just in the jaws of ruin, and Codille;[†]

And now (as oft in some distempered state)

On one nice trick depends the general fate.

95 An Ace of Hearts steps forth: the King unseen

Lurked in her hand, and mourned his captive Queen.

He springs to vengeance with an eager pace,

And falls like thunder on the prostrate Ace.

The nymph exulting fills with shouts the sky,

The walls, the woods, and long canals reply.

100 Oh thoughtless mortals! ever blind to fate,

Too soon dejected, and too soon elate!

Sudden these honours shall be snatched away,

And cursed forever this victorious day.

105 For lo! the board with cups and spoons is crowned,

The berries crackle, and the mill turns round.

On shining altars[†] of Japan they raise

The silver lamp; the fiery spirits blaze;

From silver spouts the grateful liquors glide,

110 While China's earth receives the smoking tide.

altars lacquered tables, on which coffee is ritually made

At once they gratify their scent and taste,
And frequent cups prolong the rich repast.
Straight hover round the fair her airy band;
Some, as she sipped, the fuming liquor fanned,
Some o'er her lap their careful plumes displayed,
Trembling, and conscious of the rich brocade.

Coffee (which makes the politician wise,
And see through all things with his half-shut eyes)
Sent up in vapours to the Baron's brain
New stratagems, the radiant lock to gain.

Ah cease, rash youth! desist ere 'tis too late,
Fear the just Gods, and think of Scylla's[†] fate!
Changed to a bird, and sent to flit in air,
She dearly pays for Nisus' injured hair!

But when to mischief mortals bend their will,
How soon they find fit instruments of ill!
Just then, Clarissa drew with tempting grace
A two-edged weapon from her shining case;
So ladies in romance assist their knight,
Present the spear, and arm him for the fight.

He takes the gift with reverence, and extends
The little engine on his fingers' ends;

This just behind Belinda's neck he spread,
As o'er the fragrant steams she bends her head:
Swift to the lock a thousand sprites repair,
A thousand wings, by turns, blow back the hair,
And thrice they twitched the diamond in her ear,
Thrice she looked back, and thrice the foe drew near.

Just in that instant, anxious Ariel sought
The close recesses of the virgin's thought;
As, on the nosegay in her breast reclined,
He watched th' ideas rising in her mind,
Sudden he viewed, in spite of all her art,
An earthly lover lurking at her heart.

Amazed, confused, he found his power expired,
Resigned to fate, and with a sigh retired.

The Peer now spreads the glittering forfex[†] wide,
T' enclose the lock; now joins it, to divide.

Even then, before the fatal engine closed,
A wretched Sylph too fondly interposed;

Scylla transformed after her theft of the purple lock which held her father Nisus's power
forfex scissors ('the fatal engine')

Fate urged the shears, and cut the Sylph in twain
(But airy substance soon unites again);

The meeting points the sacred hair dis sever
From the fair head, for ever and for ever!

Then flashed the living lightning from her eyes,
And screams of horror rend th' affrighted skies.

Not louder shrieks to pitying heaven are cast,
When husbands or when lapdogs breathe their last;
Or when rich china vessels, fallen from high,
In glittering dust and painted fragments lie!

'Let wreaths of triumph now my temples twine,'
The victor cried, 'the glorious prize is mine!
While fish in streams, or birds delight in air,
Or in a coach and six the British fair,

As long as *Atalantis*[†] shall be read,
Or the small pillow grace a lady's bed,
While visits shall be paid on solemn days,
When numerous wax-lights in bright order blaze,

While nymphs take treats, or assignments give,
So long my honour, name, and praise shall live!
What Time would spare, from Steel receives its date,
And monuments, like men, submit to fate!

Steel could the labour of the gods[†] destroy,
And strike to dust th' imperial towers of Troy;
Steel could the works of mortal pride confound,
And hew triumphal arches to the ground.

What wonder then, fair nymph! thy hairs should feel
The conquering force of unresisted steel?

Canto IV

But anxious cares the pensive nymph oppressed,
And secret passions laboured in her breast.

Not youthful kings in battle seized alive,
Not scornful virgins who their charms survive,

Not ardent lovers robbed of all their bliss,
Not ancient ladies when refused a kiss,

Not tyrants fierce that unrepenting die,
Not Cynthia when her manteau's[†] pinned awry,

Atalantis A recent (1709) book of court scandal, by Mary Manley
book of court
scandal, by Mary Manley

gods Troy was built by Apollo and Poseidon
manteau loose robe

- E'er felt such rage, resentment and despair,
 As thou, sad virgin! for thy ravished hair.
 For, that sad moment, when the Sylphs withdrew,
 And Ariel weeping from Belinda flew,
 Umbriel,[†] a dusky, melancholy sprite
 As ever sullied the fair face of light,
 Down to the central earth, his proper scene,
 Repaired to search the gloomy Cave of Spleen.[†]
 Swift on his sooty pinions flits the Gnome,
 And in a vapour reached the dismal dome.
 No cheerful breeze this sullen region knows,
 The dreaded east is all the wind that blows.
 Here in a grotto, sheltered close from air,
 And screened in shades from day's detested glare,
 She sighs forever on her pensive bed,
 Pain at her side, and Megrim[†] at her head.
 Two handmaids wait the throne: alike in place,
 But differing far in figure and in face.
 Here stood Ill-nature like an ancient maid,
 Her wrinkled form in black and white arrayed;
 With store of prayers for mornings, nights and noons,
 Her hand is filled; her bosom with lampoons.
 There Affectation with a sickly mien
 Shows in her cheek the roses of eighteen,
 Practised to lisp, and hang the head aside,
 Faints into airs, and languishes with pride;
 On the rich quilt sinks with becoming woe,
 Wrapped in a gown, for sickness and for show.
 The fair ones feel such maladies as these,
 When each new nightdress gives a new disease.
 A constant vapour o'er the palace flies,
 Strange phantoms rising as the mists arise;
 Dreadful as hermit's dreams in haunted shades,
 Or bright as visions of expiring maids.
 Now glaring fiends and snakes on rolling spires,
 Pale spectres, gaping tombs, and purple fires;
 Now lakes of liquid gold, Elysian scenes,
 And crystal domes, and angels in machines.
 Unnumbered throngs on every side are seen
 Of bodies changed to various forms by Spleen.

Umbriel from Latin 'umbra' (shade); his visit to *Spleen* (fashionable melancholy) constitutes an epic descent
Megrim headache. The Cave combines pantomime effects with images of female hysteria

- Here living teapots stand, one arm held out,
 One bent; the handle this, and that the spout:
 A pipkin[†] there like Homer's tripod walks;
 Here sighs a jar, and there a goose pie talks;
 Men prove with child as powerful fancy works,
 And maids, turned bottles, call aloud for corks.
 Safe passed the Gnome through this fantastic band,
 A branch of healing spleenwort[†] in his hand.
 Then thus addressed the Power: 'Hail, wayward Queen!
 Who rule the sex to fifty from fifteen;
 Parent of vapours and of female wit,
 Who give th' hysteric or poetic fit,
 On various tempers act by various ways,
 Make some take physic, others scribble plays;
 Who cause the proud their visits to delay,
 And send the godly in a pet to pray.
 A nymph there is that all thy power disdains,
 And thousands more in equal mirth maintains.
 But oh! if e'er thy Gnome could spoil a grace,
 Or raise a pimple on a beauteous face,
 Like citron-waters[†] matrons' cheeks inflame,
 Or change complexions at a losing game;
 If e'er with airy horns[†] I planted heads,
 Or rumpled petticoats or tumbled beds,
 Or caused suspicion when no soul was rude,
 Or discomposed the headress of a prude,
 Or e'er to costive lapdog gave disease,
 Which not the tears of brightest eyes could ease;
 Hear me, and touch Belinda with chagrin:
 That single act gives half the world the spleen.'
 The Goddess with a discontented air
 Seems to reject him, though she grants his prayer.
 A wondrous bag with both her hands she binds,
 Like that where once Ulysses[†] held the winds;
 There she collects the force of female lungs,
 Sighs, sobs and passions, and the war of tongues.
 A vial next she fills with fainting fears,
 Soft sorrows, melting griefs and flowing tears.

pipkin earthenware pot; the allusion is to *Iliad*, XVIII.439
spleenwort a plant which counteracts spleen's effects
citron-waters brandy flavoured with lemon-like fruit
airy horns groundless signs of a man cuckolded by his wife
Ulysses given a bag of winds by Aeolus (*Odyssey*, X)

The Gnome rejoicing bears her gifts away,
Spreads his black wings, and slowly mounts to day.

Sunk in Thalestris[†] arms the nymph he found,
Her eyes dejected and her hair unbound.

Full o'er their heads the swelling bag he rent,
And all the Furies issued at the vent.

Belinda burns with more than mortal ire,
And fierce Thalestris fans the rising fire.

'O wretched maid!' she spread her hands, and cried
(While Hampton's echoes, 'Wretched maid!' replied),

'Was it for this you took such constant care
The bodkin, comb and essence to prepare;

For this your locks in paper durance bound,
For this with torturing irons[†] wreathed around?

For this with fillets[†] strained your tender head,
And bravely bore the double loads of lead?[†]

Gods! shall the ravisher display your hair,
While the fops envy, and the ladies stare!

Honour forbid! at whose unrivalled shrine
Ease, pleasure, virtue, all, our sex resign.

Methinks already I your tears survey,
Already hear the horrid things they say,

Already see you a degraded toast,
And all your honour in a whisper lost!

How shall I, then, your helpless fame defend?
'Twill then be infamy to seem your friend!

And shall this prize, th' inestimable prize,
Exposed through crystal to the gazing eyes,

And heightened by the diamond's circling rays,
On that rapacious hand forever blaze?

Sooner shall grass in Hyde Park Circus grow,
And wits take lodgings in the sound of Bow;[†]

Sooner let earth, air, sea, to chaos fall,
Men, monkeys, lapdogs, parrots, perish all!

She said; then raging to Sir Plume[†] repairs,
And bids her beau demand the precious hairs

(Sir Plume, of amber snuffbox[†] justly vain,
And the nice conduct of a clouded^{*} cane);

With earnest eyes, and round unthinking face,
He first the snuffbox opened, then the case,

mottled

Thalestris Queen of the Amazons, hence a fierce woman
fillets headbands, in epic; the references (*irons*, *Sir Plume* a blustering, if gentlemanly, foil to *lead*) are to hairdressing

Circus a busy fashionable place; by contrast, *Bow* was middle-class
Sir Plume the Baron

And thus broke out – 'My Lord, why, what the devil!
Zounds![†] damn the lock! 'fore Gad, you must be civil!

Plague on't! 'tis past a jest – nay prithee, pox!
Give her the hair' – he spoke, and rapped his box.

'It grieves me much,' replied the Peer again,
'Who speaks so well should ever speak in vain.

But by this lock, this sacred lock I swear
(Which never more shall join its parted hair,

Which never more its honours shall renew,
Clipped from the lovely head where late it grew),

That while my nostrils draw the vital air,
This hand, which won it, shall forever wear.'

He spoke, and speaking, in proud triumph spread
The long-contended honours of her head.

But Umbriel, hateful Gnome, forbears not so;
He breaks the vial whence the sorrows flow.

Then see! the nymph in beauteous grief appears,
Her eyes half languishing, half drowned in tears;

On her heaved bosom hung her drooping head,
Which with a sigh she raised; and thus she said:

'Forever cursed be this detested day,
Which snatched my best, my favourite curl away!

Happy! ah ten times happy had I been,
If Hampton Court these eyes had never seen!

Yet am not I the first mistaken maid,
By love of courts to numerous ills betrayed.

Oh had I rather unadmired remained
In some lone isle, or distant northern land;

Where the gilt chariot never marks the way,
Where none learn ombre, none e'er taste bohea![†]

There kept my charms concealed from mortal eye,
Like roses that in deserts bloom and die.

What moved my mind with youthful lords to roam?
Oh had I stayed, and said my prayers at home!

'Twas this the morning omens seemed to tell;
Thrice from my trembling hand the patch box fell;

The tottering china shook without a wind,
Nay, Poll sat mute, and Shock was most unkind!

A Sylph too warned me of the threats of fate,
In mystic visions, now believed too late!

Zounds a mild oath
bohea tea. This speech imitates Achilles' lament for Patroclus: *Iliad*, XVIII

See the poor remnants of these slighted hairs!
My hands shall rend what even thy rapine spares.

These, in two sable ringlets taught to break,
Once gave new beauties to the snowy neck;

The sister lock now sits uncouth, alone,
And in its fellow's fate foresees its own;

Uncurled it hangs, the fatal shears demands,
And tempts once more thy sacrilegious hands.

Oh hadst thou, cruel! been content to seize
Hairs less in sight, or any hairs but these!

Canto V

She said: the pitying audience melt in tears,
But Fate and Jove had stopped the Baron's ears.
In vain Thalestris with reproach assails,

For who can move when fair Belinda tails?

Not half so fixed the Trojan[†] could remain,
While Anna begged and Dido raged in vain.
Then grave Clarissa[†] graceful waved her fan;
Silence ensued, and thus the nymph began:

'Say why are beauties praised and honoured most,
The wise man's passion, and the vain man's toast?

Why decked with all that land and sea afford,
Why angels called, and angel-like adored?

Why round our coaches crowd the white-gloved beaux,
Why bows the side box from its inmost rows?

How vain are all these glories, all our pains,
Unless good sense preserve what beauty gains;

That men may say, when we the front box grace,
'Behold the first in virtue as in face!'

Oh if to dance all night, and dress all day,
Charmed the smallpox, or chased old age away,

Who would not scorn what housewife's cares produce,
Or who would learn one earthly thing of use?

To patch, nay ogle, might become a saint,
Nor could it sure be such a sin to paint.

But since, alas! frail beauty must decay,
Curled or uncurled, since locks will turn to grey,

Trojan . . . *Dido* Aeneas deserted Dido of
Carthage, despite her sister Anna

Clarissa her speech, added in 1717, imitates

that of Sarpedon to Glaucus, *Iliad*, XII.371–
96

Since painted, or not painted, all shall fade,
And she who scorns a man must die a maid;
What then remains, but well our power to use,
And keep good humour still whate'er we lose?
And trust me, dear, good humour can prevail,
When airs, and flights, and screams, and scolding fail.
Beauties in vain their pretty eyes may roll;
Charms strike the sight, but merit wins the soul.'

So spoke the dame, but no applause ensued;
Belinda frowned, Thalestris called her prude.

'To arms, to arms!' the fierce virago cries,
And swift as lightning to the combat flies.
All side in parties, and begin th' attack;

Fans clap, silks rustle, and tough whalebones crack;
Heroes' and heroines' shouts confusedly rise,
And bass and treble voices strike the skies.

No common weapons in their hands are found,
Like gods they fight, nor dread a mortal wound.

So when bold Homer makes the gods engage,
And heavenly breasts with human passions rage;
'Gainst Pallas, Mars; Latona, Hermes arms;
And all Olympus[†] rings with loud alarms.

Jove's thunder roars, heaven trembles all around;
Blue Neptune storms, the bellowing deeps resound;
Earth shakes her nodding towers, the ground gives way;
And the pale ghosts start at the flash of day!

Triumphant Umbriel on a sounce's[†] height
Clapped his glad wings, and sat to view the fight:
Propped on their bodkin spears, the sprites survey
The growing combat, or assist the fray.

While through the press enraged Thalestris flies,
And scatters deaths around from both her eyes,
A beau and witling perished in the throng,
One died in metaphor, and one in song.

'O cruel nymph! a living death I bear,'
Cried Dapperwit,[†] and sunk beside his chair.

A mournful glance Sir Fopling[†] upwards cast,
'Those eyes are made so killing' – was his last:

Thus on Maeander's flowery margin[†] lies

Olympus mountain of the gods, who in
Homer fight each other and humans

sounce candlestick fixed on a bracket

Dapperwit like Sir Fopling, a character in
Restoration comedy

Maeander's flowery margin river banks

Th' expiring swan,[†] and as he sings he dies.

When bold Sir Plume had drawn Clarissa down,
Chloe stepped in, and killed him with a frown;
She smiled to see the doughty hero slain,
But at her smile the beau revived again.

Now Jove suspends his golden scales[†] in air,
Weighs the men's wits against the lady's hair;
The doubtful beam long nods from side to side;
At length the wits mount up, the hairs subside.

See, fierce Belinda on the Baron flies,
With more than usual lightning in her eyes;
Nor feared the chief th' unequal fight to try,
Who sought no more than on his foe to die.[†]

But this bold lord, with manly strength endued,
She with one finger and a thumb subdued:

Just where the breath of life his nostrils drew,
A charge of snuff the wily virgin threw;
The Gnomes direct, to every atom just,
The pungent grains of titillating dust.

Sudden, with starting tears each eye o'erflows,
And the high dome re-echoes to his nose.

'Now meet thy fate,' incensed Belinda cried,
And drew a deadly bodkin from her side.

(The same,[†] his ancient personage to deck,
Her great-great-grand sire wore about his neck
In three seal-rings; which after, melted down,
Formed a vast buckle for his widow's gown:

Her infant grandam's whistle next it grew,
The bells she jingled, and the whistle blew;
Then in a bodkin graced her mother's hairs,
Which long she wore, and now Belinda wears.)

'Boast not my fall,' he cried, 'insulting foe!
Thou by some other shalt be laid as low.

Nor think, to die dejects my lofty mind;
All that I dread is leaving you behind!

Rather than so, ah let me still survive,
And burn in Cupid's flames — but burn alive.'

'Restore the lock!' she cries; and all around
'Restore the lock!' the vaulted roofs rebound.

swan traditionally sings as it dies
golden scales used in epic by Jove to decide a battle's outcome
die the pun on sexual climax continues the poem's vein of innuendo (compare l.98)

the same parody of the descent of a heroic object

105 Not fierce Othello[†] in so loud a strain
Roared for the handkerchief that caused his pain.
But see how oft ambitious aims are crossed,
And chiefs contend till all the prize is lost!

110 The lock, obtained with guilt, and kept with pain,
In every place is sought, but sought in vain:
With such a prize no mortal must be blest,
So Heaven decrees! with Heaven who can contest?

Some thought it mounted to the lunar sphere,
Since all things lost on earth are treasured there.
There heroes' wits are kept in ponderous vases,
And beaux' in snuffboxes and tweezer-cases.

There broken vows and deathbed alms are found,
And lovers' hearts with ends of riband bound;
The courtier's promises, and sick man's prayers,
The smiles of harlots, and the tears of heirs,
Cages for gnats, and chains to yoke a flea,
Dried butterflies, and tomes of casuistry[†]

But trust the Muse — she saw it upward rise,
Though marked by none but quick poetic eyes
(So Rome's great founder to the heavens withdrew,
To Proculus[†] alone confessed in view):

A sudden star, it shot through liquid air,
And drew behind a radiant trail of hair.
Not Berenice's locks[†] first rose so bright,
The heavens bespangling with dishevelled light.

130 The Sylphs behold it kindling as it flies,
And pleased pursue its progress through the skies.
This the beau monde shall from the Mall[†] survey,
And hail with music its propitious ray.

135 This the blest lover shall for Venus[†] take,
And send up vows from Rosamonda's Lake.
This Partridge[†] soon shall view in cloudless skies,
When next he looks through Galileo's[†] eyes;

And hence th' egregious wizard shall foredoom
The fate of Louis,[†] and the fall of Rome.

Othello in Shakespeare's play, III.4
casuistry quibbling about moral conduct
Proculus saw Romulus ascend to heaven in a storm
Berenice's locks offered to the gods for safe return of her husband Ptolemy III from war, they turned into a constellation
Mall ... *Rosamonda's Lake* walk in St James's Park (where the Lake was associated with unhappy love)

Venus goddess of love
Partridge astrologer, satirised by Swift c. 1708
Galileo Italian astronomer (1564–1642), improved the telescope
Louis Louis XIV, King of France (d.1715); Rome, of course, was long fallen

Then cease, bright nymph! to mourn thy ravished hair,
Which adds new glory to the shining sphere!
Not all the tresses that fair head can boast
Shall draw such envy as the lock you lost.
145 For, after all the murders of your eye,
When, after millions slain, yourself shall die;
When those fair suns shall set, as set they must,
And all those tresses shall be laid in dust;
This lock the Muse shall consecrate to fame,
150 And 'midst the stars inscribe Belinda's name!

1712-14

1714, 1717

EPISTLE TO MISS BLOUNT[†]

On her leaving the town, after the coronation

As some fond virgin, whom her mother's care
Drags from the town to wholesome country air,
Just when she learns to roll a melting eye,
And hear a spark,[†] yet think no danger nigh;

5 From the dear man unwilling she must sever,
Yet takes one kiss before she parts forever:
Thus from the world fair Zephalinda flew,
Saw others happy, and with sighs withdrew;

Not that their pleasures caused her discontent;
She sighed not that they stayed, but that she went.
10 She went to plain-work,[†] and to purling brooks,
Old-fashioned halls, dull aunts, and croaking rooks;

She went from opera, park, assembly, play,
To morning walks, and prayers three hours a day;

15 To pass her time 'twixt reading and bohea,
To muse, and spill her solitary tea,
Or o'er cold coffee trifle with the spoon,
Count the slow clock, and dine exact at noon;

Epistle to Miss Blount Probably addressed to Teresa ('Zephalinda') sister of his closer friend Martha Blount ('Parthenia'). George I succeeded Anne in 1714
spark lively man, lover
plain-work needlework, a lady's occupation. The poem stresses the gap between fashionable and rural life. London would mean late nights and dinner in mid-afternoon

20 Divert her eyes with pictures in the fire,
Hum half a tune, tell stories to the squire;
Up to her godly garret after seven,
There starve and pray, for that's the way to be
Some squire, perhaps, you take delight to ra
25 Whose game is whist, whose treat a toast in sa
Who visits with a gun, presents you birds,
Then gives a smacking buss,* and cries – 'No words!
Or with his hound comes hollowing from the stable,
Makes love with nods and knees beneath a table;
Whose laughs are hearty, though his jests are coarse,
30 And loves you best of all things – but his horse.
In some fair evening, on your elbow laid,
You dream of triumphs in the rural shade;
In pensive thought recall the fancied scene,
See coronations rise on every green:

35 Before you pass th' imaginary sights
Of lords and earls and dukes and gartered knights;
While the spread fan o'er shades your closing eyes,
Then gives one flirt,* and all the vision flies.
Thus vanish sceptres, coronets, and balls,
40 And leave you in lone woods, or empty walls.
So when your slave,[†] at some dear idle time
(Not plagued with headaches or the want of rhyme)
Stands in the streets, abstracted from the crew,
And while he seems to study, thinks of you;

45 Just when his fancy points your sprightly eyes,
Or sees the blush of soft Parthenia rise,
Gay[†] pats my shoulder, and you vanish quite;
Streets, chairs and coxcombs rush upon my sight;
Vexed to be still in town, I knit my brow,
50 Look sour, and hum a tune – as you may now.

1714

1717

sack Spanish wine; perhaps also a pun on 'lady's gown'
your slave Pope himself
Gay his friend, the poet

From ELOISA TO ABELARD[†]

- In these deep solitudes and awful cells,[†]
 Where heavenly-pensive contemplation dwells,
 And ever-musing melancholy reigns;
 What means this tumult in a vestal's* veins?
 Why rove my thoughts beyond this last retreat?
 Why feels my heart its long-forgotten heat?
 Yet, yet I love! – From Abelard it came,
 And Eloisa yet must kiss the name.
 Dear fatal name! rest ever unrevealed,
 Nor pass these lips in holy silence sealed.
 Hide it, my heart, within that close disguise,
 Where, mixed with God's, his loved idea[†] lies.
 Oh write it not, my hand – The name appears
 Already written – wash it out, my tears!
 In vain lost Eloisa weeps and prays,
 Her heart still dictates, and her hand obeys.
 Relentless walls! whose darksome round contains
 Repentant sighs, and voluntary pains;
 Ye rugged rocks! which holy knees have worn;
 Ye grotts and caverns shagged with horrid[†] thorn!
 Shrines! where their vigils pale-eyed virgins keep,
 And pitying saints, whose statues learn to weep!
 Though cold like you, unmoved, and silent grown,
 I have not yet forgot my self to stone.
 All is not Heaven's while Abelard has part,
 Still rebel nature holds out half my heart;
 Nor prayers nor fasts its stubborn pulse restrain,
 Nor tears, for ages, taught to flow in vain. . . .
 Thou know'st how guiltless first I met thy flame,
 When love approached me under friendship's name;
 My fancy formed thee of angelic kind,
 Some emanation of[†] th' all-beauteous Mind.
 Those smiling eyes, attempting* every ray,

moderating

Eloisa to Abelard In the twelfth century, the scholar Abelard was forcibly separated from his pupil and love, Eloisa; both entered religious houses. Pope presents Eloisa's passionate conflict, caught between heavenly and earthly love, responding, in a heroic epistle in the manner of Ovid, to a letter from Abelard (l.7). The abrupt changes of mood are appropriate to subject and genre

cells of nuns, in her convent
idea image ('mixed' in his religious and secular roles)
horrid bristling (Latin); her emotions and surroundings are closely linked
some emanation of something issuing from

- Shone sweetly lambent* with celestial day:
 Guiltless I gazed; heaven listened while you sung;
 And truths divine[†] came mended from that tongue.
 From lips like those what precept failed to move?
 Too soon they taught me 'twas no sin to love.
 Back through the paths of pleasing sense[†] I ran,
 Nor wished an angel whom I loved a man.
 Dim and remote the joys of saints I see,
 Nor envy them, that heaven I lose for thee. . . .
 Alas how changed what sudden horrors rise!
 A naked lover bound and bleeding lies!
 Where, where was Eloise? her voice, her hand,
 Her poniard, had opposed the dire command.
 Barbarian stay! that bloody stroke[†] restrain;
 The crime was common, common be the pain.
 I can no more; by shame, by rage suppress,
 Let tears, and burning blushes speak the rest.
 Canst thou forget that sad, that solemn day,[†]
 When victims at yon altar's foot we lay?
 Canst thou forget what tears that moment fell,
 When, warm in youth, I bade the world farewell?
 As with cold lips I kissed the sacred veil,
 The shrines all trembled, and the lamps grew pale:
 Heaven scarce believed the conquest it surveyed,
 And saints with wonder heard the vows I made.
 Yet then, to those dread altars as I drew,
 Not on the Cross my eyes were fixed, but you;
 Not grace, or zeal, love only was my call,
 And if I lose thy love, I lose my all.
 Come! with thy looks, thy words, relieve my woe;
 Those still at least are left thee to bestow.
 Still on that breast enamoured let me lie,
 Still drink delicious poison from thy eye,
 Pant on thy lip, and to thy heart be prest;
 Give all thou canst – and let me dream the rest.
 Ah no! instruct me other joys to prize,
 With other beauties charm my partial eyes,
 Full in my view set all the bright abode,[†]
 And make my soul quit Abelard for God.

truths divine Abelard was her tutor
pleasing sense indicates her response to his physical attraction as a man
bloody stroke the castration of Abelard by Eloisa's relatives
solemn day when Eloisa took the nun's veil
bright abode the spiritual goal of heaven (light/dark images recur)

radiant

- 130 Ah think at least thy flock deserves thy care,
Plants of thy hand, and children of thy prayer.
From the false world in early youth they fled,
By thee to mountains, wilds, and deserts led.
You raised^t these hallowed walls; the desert smiled,
And Paradise was opened in the wild.
- 135 No weeping orphan saw his father's stores
Our shrines irradiate, or emblaze the floors;
No silver saints, by dying misers given,
Here bribed the rage of ill-requited heaven:
But such plain roofs as piety could raise,
And only vocal with the Maker's praise.
- 140 In these lone walls (their day's eternal bound)
These moss-grown domes^t with spiry turrets crowned,
Where awful^t arches make a noon-day night,
And the dim windows shed a solemn light;
Thy eyes diffused a reconciling ray,
And gleams of glory brightened all the day.
- 145 But now no face divine contentment wears,
'Tis all blank sadness, or continual tears.
See how the force of others' prayers I try,
(Oh pious fraud^t of amorous charity!)
But why should I on others' prayers depend?
Come thou, my father, brother, husband, friend!
- 150 Ah let thy handmaid, sister, daughter, move,
And, all those tender names in one, thy love!
The darksome pines that o'er yon rocks reclined
Wave high, and murmur to the hollow wind,
The wandering streams that shine between the hills,
The grotts that echo to the tinkling rills,
- 155 The dying gales that pant upon the trees,
The lakes that quiver to the curling breeze;
No more these scenes my meditation aid,
Or lull to rest the visionary maid:
But o'er the twilight groves, and dusky caves,
Long-sounding isles, and intermingled graves,
Black melancholy sits, and round her throws
A death-like silence, and a dread repose:
Her gloomy presence saddens all the scene,
Shades every flower, and darkens every green,

you raised Abelard had founded her convent,
which is not expensively adorned (l.136)
domes solemn buildings (Latin)

awful inspiring dread
pious fraud in asking him to come for the
consolation of others

- 170 Deepens the murmur of the falling floods,
And breathes a browner horror on the woods.
Yet here for ever, ever must I stay;
Sad proof how well a lover can obey!
Death, only death, can break the lasting chain;
And here, even then, shall my cold dust remain,
Here all its frailties, all its flames resign,
And wait, till 'tis no sin to mix with thine. . . .
- 175 What scenes appear where-e'er I turn my view!
The dear ideas,^t where I fly, pursue,
Rise in the grove, before the altar rise,
Stain all my soul, and wanton in my eyes!
I waste the Matin^t lamp in sighs for thee,
Thy image steals between my God and me,
Thy voice I seem in every hymn to hear,
With every bead^t I drop too soft a tear.
- 265 When from the censor^t clouds of fragrance roll,
And swelling organs lift the rising soul;
One thought of thee puts all the pomp to flight,
Priests, tapers, temples, swim before my sight:
In seas of flame my plunging soul is drowned,
While altars blaze, and angels tremble round.
- 270 While prostrate here in humble grief I lie,
Kind, virtuous drops just gathering in my eye,
While praying, trembling, in the dust I roll,
And dawning grace is opening on my soul:
Come, if thou darest, all charming as thou art!
Oppose thy self to heaven; dispute my heart;
Come, with one glance of those deluding^t eyes,
Blot out each bright idea of the skies.
- 285 Take back that grace, those sorrows, and those tears,
Take back my fruitless penitence and prayers,
Snatch me, just mounting, from the blest abode,
Assist the fiends and tear me from my God!
No, fly me, fly me! far as Pole from Pole;
Rise Alps between us! and whole oceans roll!
Ah come not, write not, think not once of me,
Nor share one pang of all I felt for thee.
- 290

ideas Abelard's image has already appeared
in her dreams
censor vessel in which incense is burned
deluding Abelard's presence would cause her
to break her vow to heaven

Matin first part of the religious day, the office
recited before dawn
bead on the cord by which she counts her
prayers

Thy oaths I quit, thy memory resign,
Forget, renounce me, hate whate'er was mine. . . .

1716

1717

EPISTLE II. TO A LADY[†]

Of the characters of women

Nothing so true as what you once let fall,
'Most women have no characters at all:'

Matter too soft a lasting mark to bear,
And best distinguished by black, brown, or fair.
How many pictures[†] of one nymph we view,
All how unlike each other, all how true!

Arcadia's countess, here, in ermined pride,
Is, there, Pastora by a fountain side;
Here Fannia, leering on her own good man,
Is there, a naked Leda[†] with a swan.

Let then the fair one beautifully cry,
In Magdalen's loose hair and lifted eye,
Or dressed in smiles of sweet Cecilia shine,
With simpering angels, palms, and harps divine;
Whether the charmer sinner it, or saint it,
If folly grows romantic, I must paint it.

Come then, the colours and the ground[†] prepare!
Dip in the rainbow, trick^{*} her off in air;
Choose a firm cloud, before it fall, and in it
Catch, ere she change, the Cynthia[†] of this minute.

Rufa, whose eye quick-glancing o'er the park,
Attracts each light gay meteor of a spark,
Agrees as ill with Rufa studying Locke,[†]
As Sappho's diamonds with her dirty smock;

sketch

[The closing paragraphs anticipate Abeldard's religious attendance at Eloisa's death-bed; their eventual burials in the same grave; and their commemoration by a sympathetic poet]

Epistle II. To a Lady Addressed to his old friend, Martha Blount (1690–1763). The leading idea of the portraits is the inconsistency of women
pictures . . . Leda the examples show the variety of attitude in a single woman: sophisticated, pastoral, modest, wanton (Jupiter as a swan seduced Leda), fallen woman or patron saint
ground painting surface
Cynthia goddess of the changing moon
Locke John Locke (1632–1704), English philosopher

- 25 Or Sappho[†] at her toilet's greasy task,
With Sappho fragrant at an evening masque:
So morning insects that in muck begun,
Shine, buzz, and flyblow in the setting sun.
How soft is Silia! fearful to offend,
The frail one's advocate, the weak one's friend:
To her, Calista proved her conduct nice,[†]
And good Simplicius asks of her advice.
Sudden, she storms! she raves! You tip the wink,
But spare your censure; Silia does not drink.
35 All eyes may see from what the change arose,
All eyes may see – a pimple on her nose.
Papillia, wedded to her doting spark,
Sighs for the shades – 'How charming is a park!'
A park is purchased, but the fair he sees
All bathed in tears – 'Oh odious, odious trees!'
40 Ladies, like variegated tulips, show,
'Tis to their changes half their charms we owe;
Their happy spots the nice admirer take,
Fine by defect, and delicately weak.
'Twas thus Calypso[†] once each heart alarmed,
Awed without virtue, without beauty charmed;
Her tongue bewitched as oddly as her eyes,
Less wit than mimic, more a wit than wise:
Strange graces still, and stranger flights she had,
Was just not ugly, and was just not mad;
50 Yet ne'er so sure our passion to create,
As when she touched the brink of all we hate.
Narcissa's[†] nature, tolerably mild,
To make a wash, would hardly stew a child,
Has even been proved to grant a lover's prayer,
And paid a tradesman once to make him stare,
Gave alms at Easter, in a Christian trim,
And made a widow happy, for a whim.
Why then declare good nature is her scorn,
When 'tis by that alone she can be borne?
60 Why pique all mortals, yet affect a name?
A fool to pleasure, and a slave to fame;

Sappho originally, a Greek poetess; here, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, friend then enemy of Pope (see p. 256); a notorious sloven
Narcissa from Narcissus, who fell in love with his own reflection, in Greek legend
nice precise, punctilious
Calypso in Homer's *Odyssey*, the original

Now deep in Taylor[†] and the *Book of Martyrs*,[†]
Now drinking citron with His Grace[†] and Chartres.[†]

65 Now conscience chills her, and now passion burns;
And atheism and religion take their turns;
A very heathen in the carnal part,

Yet still a sad, good Christian at her heart.

See Sin in state, majestically drunk,

70 Proud as a peeress, prouder as a punk,*

Chaste to her husband, frank to all beside,

A teeming mistress, but a barren bride.

What then? let blood and body bear the fault,

Her head's untouched, that noble seat of thought:

75 Such this day's doctrine – in another fit

She sins with poets through pure love of wit.

What has not fired her bosom or her brain?

Caesar and Tallboy,[†] Charles[†] and Charlemagne.

As Helluo,[†] late dictator of the feast,

80 The nose of hautgout,[†] and the tip of taste,

Cricked your wine, and analyzed your meat,

Yet on plain pudding deigned at home to eat;

So Philomede, lecturing all mankind

On the soft passion, and the taste refined,

85 Th' address, the delicacy – stoops at once,

And makes her hearty meal upon a dunce.

Flavia's a wit, has too much sense to pray;

To toast our wants and wishes, is her way;

Nor asks of God, but of her stars, to give

90 The mighty blessing, 'while we live, to live.'

Then all for death, that opiate of the soul!

Lucretia's[†] dagger, Rosamonda's[†] bowl.

Say, what can cause such impotence of mind?

A spark too fickle, or a spouse too kind.

95 Wise wretch! with pleasures too refined to please,

With too much spirit to be e'er at ease,

With too much quickness ever to be taught,

With too much thinking to have common thought:

<i>Taylor</i>	John Taylor (1613–67), devotional writer	<i>Helluo</i>	glutton (Latin)
<i>Book of Martyrs</i>	by John Foxe, 1563	<i>hautgout</i>	anything strong in taste or scent
<i>His Grace</i>	a duke	<i>Lucretia</i>	Roman who committed suicide after rape by Tarquin
<i>Chartres</i>	Francis Chartres: usurer and rapist (d.1732), often attacked by Pope	<i>Rosamonda</i>	mistress of Henry II, was forced by the queen to drink poison
<i>Tallboy</i>	a stage booby		
<i>Charles</i>	a footman; contrasted with mighty rulers		

Who purchase pain with all that joy can give,
And die of nothing but a rage to live.

100 Turn then from wits; and look on Simo's mate,
No ass so meek, no ass so obstinate;

Or her, that owns her faults, but never mends,

Because she's honest, and the best of friends;

105 Or her, whose life the Church and scandal share,
Forever in a passion, or a prayer;

Or her, who laughs at hell, but (like Her Grace)

Cries, 'Ah! how charming if there's no such place!'

Or who in sweet vicissitude appears

110 Of mirth and opium, ratafie[†] and tears,

The daily anodyne, and nightly draught,

To kill those foes to fair ones, time and thought.

Woman and fool are two hard things to hit,

For true no-meaning puzzles more than wit.

115 But what are these to great Atossa's[†] mind?

Scarce once herself, by turns all womankind!

Who, with herself, or others, from her birth

Finds all her life one warfare upon earth;

Shines in exposing knaves, and painting fools,

120 Yet is whate'er she hates and ridicules.

No thought advances, but her eddy brain

Whisks it about, and down it goes again.

Full sixty years the world has been her trade,

The wisest fool much time has ever made.

125 From loveless youth to unrespected age,
No passion gratified except her rage.

So much the fury still outran the wit,

The pleasure missed her, and the scandal hit.

Who breaks with her, provokes revenge from hell,

130 But he's a bolder man who dares be well:

Her every turn with violence pursued,

Nor more a storm her hate than gratitude.

To that each passion turns, or soon or late;

Love, if it makes her yield, must make her hate:

135 Superiors? death! and equals? what a curse!

But an inferior not dependent? worse.

Offend her, and she knows not to forgive;

Oblige her, and she'll hate you while you live:

ratafie ratafia, a fruit-flavoured brandy

Atossa historically, daughter of the Persian

Emperor Cyrus; here, possibly the Duchess

of Buckinghamshire (c. 1682–1743),
daughter of James II; friend then enemy of
Pope. Her children died before her (l.148)

- 140 But die, and she'll adore you – Then the bust
And temple rise – then fall again to dust.
Last night, her lord was all that's good and great;
A knave this morning, and his will a cheat.
Strange! by the means defeated of the ends,
By spirit robbed of power, by warmth of friends,
By wealth of followers! without one distress
Sick of herself through very selfishness!
- 145 Arossa, cursed with every granted prayer,
Childless with all her children, wants an heir.
To heirs unknown descends th' unguarded store,
Or wanders, Heaven-directed, to the poor.
Pictures like these, dear Madam, to design,
Asks no firm hand, and no unerring line;
Some wandering touch, or some reflected light,
Some flying stroke alone can hit 'em right:
- 150 For how should equal colours do the knack?
Chameleons who can paint in white and black?
'Yet Chloe sure was formed without a spot –'
Nature in her then erred not, but forgot.
'With every pleasing, every prudent part,
Say, what can Chloe want?' – She wants a heart.
She speaks, behaves, and acts just as she ought;
But never, never, reached one generous thought.
Virtue she finds too painful an endeavour,
Content to dwell in decencies for ever.
- 155 So very reasonable, so unmoved,
As never yet to love, or to be loved.
She, while her lover pants upon her breast,
Can mark the figures on an Indian chest;
And when she sees her friend in deep despair,
Observes how much a chintz exceeds mohair.
Forbid it Heaven, a favour or a debt
She e'er should cancel – but she may forget.
- 160 Safe is your secret still in Chloe's ear;
But none of Chloe's shall you ever hear.
Of all her dears she never slandered one,
But cares not if a thousand are undone.
Would Chloe know if you're alive or dead?
She bids her footman put it in her head.
Chloe is prudent – Would you too be wise?
Then never break your heart when Chloe dies.
- 165 170 175 180

- One certain portrait may (I grant) be seen,
Which Heaven has varnished out, and made a Queen:[†]
The same for ever! and described by all
With truth and goodness, as with crown and ball.
Poets heap virtues, painters gems at will,
And show their zeal, and hide their want of skill.
'Tis well – but, artists! who can paint or write,
To draw the naked is your true delight.
That robe of quality so struts and swells,
None see what parts of Nature it conceals.
Th' exactest traits of body or of mind,
We owe to models of an humble kind.
If Queensberry to strip there's no compelling,
'Tis from a handmaid we must take a Helen.[†]
- 185 190 195 200 205 210 215
- From peer or bishop 'tis no easy thing
To draw the man who loves his God, or king:
Alas! I copy (or my draft would fail)
From honest Mah'met[†] or plain Parson Hale.[†]
But grant, in public men sometimes are shown,
A woman's seen in private life alone:
Our bolder talents in full light displayed;
Your virtues open fairest in the shade.
Bred to disguise, in public 'tis you hide;
There, none distinguish 'twixt your shame or pride,
Weakness or delicacy; all so nice,
That each may seem a virtue, or a vice.
In men, we various ruling passions find,
In women, two almost divide the kind;
Those, only fixed, they first or last obey,
The love of pleasure, and the love of sway.
That, Nature gives; and where the lesson taught
Is but to please, can pleasure seem a fault?[†]
Experience, this; by man's oppression cursed,
They seek the second not to lose the first.
Men, some to business, some to pleasure take;
But every woman is at heart a rake;
Men, some to quiet, some to public strife;
But every lady would be queen for life.

Queen Queen Caroline (1683–1737). Pope disliked her association with Sir Robert Walpole, Whig Prime Minister and with Lord Hervey (*Ep. to Arbuthnot*, 319)
Queensberry . . . *Helen* the Duchess, a beauty (like Helen of Troy), had helped John Gay
Mah'met George I's Turkish servant
Hale Stephen Hales was a clerical friend of Pope
fault Pope often rhymes this with words containing no 'l'

- 220 Yet mark the fate of a whole sex of queens!
Power all their end, but beauty all the means.
In youth they conquer, with so wild a rage,
As leaves them scarce a subject in their age:
For foreign glory, foreign joy, they roam;
No thought of peace or happiness at home.
225 But wisdom's triumph is well-timed retreat,
As hard a science to the fair as great!
Beauties, like tyrants, old and friendless grown,
Yet hate to rest, and dread to be alone,
Worn out in public, weary every eye,
Nor leave one sigh behind them when they die.
Pleasures the sex, as children birds, pursue,
Still out of reach, yet never out of view,
Sure, if they catch, to spoil the toy at most,
To covet flying, and regret when lost:
235 At last, to follies youth could scarce defend,
'Tis half their age's prudence to pretend;
Ashamed to own they gave delight before,
Reduced to feign it, when they give no more:
As hags hold sabbaths, less for joy than spite,
240 So these their merry, miserable night;
Still round and round the ghosts of beauty glide,
And haunt the places where their honour died.
See how the world its veterans rewards!
A youth of frolics, an old age of cards;
245 Fair to no purpose, artful to no end,
Young without lovers, old without a friend;
A fop their passion, but their prize a sot;
Alive, ridiculous, and dead, forgot!
Ah friend! to dazzle let the vain design,
250 To raise the thought and touch the heart be thine!
That charm shall grow, while what fatigues the Ring[†]
Flaunts and goes down, an unregarded thing.
So when the sun's broad beam has tired the sight,
All mild ascends the moon's more sober light,
255 Serene in virgin[†] modesty she shines,
And unobserved the glaring orb declines.
Oh! blest with temper, whose unclouded ray
Can make tomorrow cheerful as today;

Ring fashionable drive
virgin Diana was Roman goddess of chastity
and of the moon

- 260 She, who can love a sister's charms, or hear
Sighs for a daughter with unwounded ear;
She, who ne'er answers till a husband cools,
Or, if she rules him, never shows she rules;
Charms by accepting, by submitting sways,
Yet has her humour most, when she obeys;
265 Let fops or fortune fly which way they will;
Disdains all loss of tickets,[†] or codille;[†]
Spleen, vapours, or smallpox, above them all,
And mistress of herself, though China fall.
And yet, believe me, good as well as ill,
270 Woman's at best a contradiction still.
Heaven, when it strives to polish all it can
Its last best work, but forms a softer man;
Picks from each sex, to make its favourite blest,
Your love of pleasure, our desire of rest;
275 Blends, in exception to all general rules,
Your taste of follies, with our scorn of fools;
Reserve with frankness, art with truth allied,
Courage with softness, modesty with pride,
Fixed principles, with fancy ever new;
280 Shakes all together, and produces — you.
Be this a woman's fame: with this unblest,
Toasts live a scorn, and queens may die a jest.
This Phoebeus promised (I forget the year)
When those blue eyes first opened on the sphere;
285 Ascendant Phoebeus watched that hour with care,
Averted half your parents' simple prayer,
And gave you beauty, but denied the pelf
Which buys your sex a tyrant o'er itself.
The generous god, who wit and gold refines,[†]
290 And ripens spirits as he ripens mines,
Kept dross for duchesses, the world shall know it,
To you gave sense, good humour, and a poet.

1732–4

1735, 1744

tickets lottery tickets
codille defeat at cards

refines in Phoebeus' double role, as god of
poetry and of the sun

EPISTLE TO DR ARBUTHNOT[†]

- 'Shut, shut the door, good John!^{††} fatigued, I said,
'Tie up the knocker, say I'm sick, I'm dead.'
The Dog Star[†] rages! nay 'tis past a doubt,
All Bedlam,[†] or Parmassus,[†] is let out:
5 Fire in each eye, and papers in each hand,
They rave, recite, and madden round the land.
What walls can guard me, or what shades can hide?
They pierce my thicket, through my grot[†] they glide,
By land, by water, they renew the charge,
10 They stop the chariot, and they board the barge.
No place is sacred, not the church is free,
Even Sunday shines no Sabbath day to me:
Then from the Mint[†] walks forth the man of rhyme,
Happy to catch me just at dinner time.
15 Is there a parson, much bemused in beer,
A maudlin poetess, a rhyming peer,
A clerk foredoomed his father's soul to cross,
Who pens a stanza when he should engross?^{††}
Is there who, locked from ink and paper, scrawls
20 With desperate charcoal round his darkened walls?
All fly to Twit[†]nam, and in humble strain
Apply to me to keep them mad or vain.
Arthur,[†] whose giddy son neglects the laws,
Imputes to me and my damned works the cause:
25 Poor Cornus[†] sees his frantic wife elope,
And curses wit, and poetry, and Pope.
Friend to my life (which did not you prolong,
The world had wanted many an idle song),
What drop or nostrum[†] can this plague remove?
30 Or which must end me, a fool's wrath or love?
A dire dilemma! either way I'm sped,
If foes, they write, if friends, they read me dead.

Epistle to Dr Arbuthnot John Arbuthnot (1667–1735) had been physician to Queen Anne. Long associated with the wits of the Scriblerus group, he was the creator of John Bull. Pope's *Epistle* is an informal but impassioned Horatian defence of his own character and art against increasing attacks
John John Serle, Pope's servant
Dog Star Sirius, associated with heat and madness
Bedlam London lunatic asylum
Parnassus Mount of the Muses in Greece

grot Pope's famous shell-decorated grotto at Twickenham
Mint a sanctuary for debtors, who could escape all arrest on Sundays
engross write a legal document (as clerk)
Arthur father of James Moore Smythe, who plagiarised from Pope
Cornus a cuckold
nostrum medicine (appropriate to A's profession, and P's ill-health)

- Seized and tied down to judge, how wretched I!
Who can't be silent, and who will not lie:
To laugh, were want of goodness and of grace,
And to be grave exceeds all power of face.
I sit with sad civility, I read
With honest anguish and an aching head,
And drop at last, but in unwilling ears,
40 This saving counsel, 'Keep your piece nine years.'^{††}
'Nine years!' cries he, who high in Drury Lane,[†]
Lulled by soft zephyrs through the broken pane,
Rhymes ere he wakes, and prints before Term[†] ends,
Obliged by hunger and request of friends:
45 'The piece you think is incorrect: why, take it,
I'm all submission; what you'd have it, make it.'
Three things another's modest wishes bound,
My friendship, and a prologue, and ten pound.
Pitholeon[†] sends to me: 'You know His Grace,
50 I want a patron; ask him for a place.'
Pitholeon libelled me – 'but here's a letter
Informs you, sir, 'twas when he knew no better.
Dare you refuse him? Curl![†] invites to dine,
He'll write a *Journal*,[†] or he'll turn divine.'
55 Bless me! a packet. – 'Tis a stranger sues,
A virgin tragedy, an orphan Muse.'
If I dislike it, 'Furies, death, and rage!'
If I approve, 'Commend it to the stage.'
There (thank my stars) my whole commission ends,
60 The players and I are, luckily, no friends.
Fired that the house reject him, 'Sdeath, I'll print it,
And shame the fools – your interest, sir, with Lintot!^{††}
Lintot, dull rogue, will think your price too much.
'Not, sir, if you revise it, and retouch.'
65 All my demurs but double his attacks;
At last he whispers, 'Do, and we go snacks.'^{††}
Glad of a quarrel, straight I clap the door,
'Sir, let me see your works and you no more.'

nine years as advised by Horace, *Ars Poetica*,
388 *Curl* Edmund Curl, an old enemy, publisher of scandal, and of Pope's letters
Drury Lane abode of whores and hack-writers
Term law and publishing season
Pitholeon historically, a foolish and libellous poet of Rhodes
Lintot Bernard Lintot published Pope
go snacks share the profits

- 70 'Tis sung, when Midas[†] ears began to spring
(Midas, a sacred person and a king),
His very minister who spied them first,
(Some say his queen) was forced to speak, or burst.
And is not mine, my friend, a sorer case,
When every coxcomb perks them in my face?
- 75 'Good friend, forbear! you deal in dangerous things:
I'd never name queens, ministers, or kings;
Keep close to ears, and those let asses prick;
'Tis nothing' – Nothing? if they bite and kick?
Out with it, *Dunciad*![†] let the secret pass,
That secret to each fool, that he's an ass:
The truth once told (and wherefore should we lie?),
The queen of Midas slept, and so may I.
You think this cruel? take it for a rule,
No creature smarts so little as a fool.
- 85 Let peals of laughter, Codrus![†] round thee break,
Thou unconcerned canst hear the mighty crack.
Pit, box and gallery in convulsions hurled,
Thou stand'st unshook amidst a bursting world.
Who shames a scribbler? break one cobweb through,
He spins the slight, self-pleasing thread anew;
Destroy his fib or sophistry; in vain,
The creature's at his dirty work again,
Throned in the centre of his thin designs,
Proud of a vast extent of flimsy lines.
- 95 Whom have I hurt? has poet yet, or peer,
Lost the arched eyebrow or Parnassian sneer?
And has not Colley[†] still his lord and whore?
His butchers Henley[†] his freemasons Moore?
Does not one table Bavius[†] still admit?
Still to one bishop Philips[†] seem a wit?
Still Sappho[†] – – 'Hold! for God's sake – you'll offend:
No names – be calm – learn prudence of a friend.
I too could write, and I am twice as tall;
But foes like these! – – One flatterer's worse than all:

Midas legendary king, who could not conceal the secret of his ass's ears. Pope glances at the Queen and Waipole's manipulation of George II
Dunciad Pope's extended attack on literary dullness (1728), in the tradition of *Mac Flecknoe*
Codrus a ridiculed Roman poet
Colley Colley Cibber: Poet Laureate, hero of the revised *Dunciad* (1743)
Henley 'Orator' Henley: popular preacher
Bavius bad Roman poet
Philips Ambrose Philips (1674–1749), insipid poet, secretary to an Irish bishop
Sappho poetess (Lady Mary Wortley Montagu)

- 105 Of all mad creatures, if the learn'd are right,
It is the slaver* kills, and not the bite.
A fool quite angry is quite innocent;
Alas! 'tis ten times worse when they repent.
One dedicates in high heroic prose,
And ridicules beyond a hundred foes;
One from all Grub Street will my fame defend,
And, more abusive, calls himself my friend.
This prints my letters, that expects a bribe,
And others roar aloud, 'Subscribe, † subscribe!'
There are, who to my person pay their court:
I cough like Horace;† and, though lean, am short;
Ammon's† great son, one shoulder had too high,
Such Ovid's† nose, and 'Sir! you have an eye –'
Go on, obliging creatures, make me see
All that disgraced my betters met in me:
Say for my comfort, languishing in bed,
'Just so immortal Maro† held his head';
And when I die, be sure you let me know
Great Homer died three thousand years ago.
- 125 Why did I write? what sin to me unknown
Dipped me in ink, my parents', or my own?
As yet a child, nor yet a fool to fame,
I lisped in numbers,† for the numbers came.
I left no calling for this idle trade,
No duty broke, no father disobeyed.
The Muse but served to ease some friend, not wife,
To help me through this long disease, my life,
To second, Arbuthnot! thy art and care,
And teach the being you preserved, to bear.
But why then publish? Granville† the polite,
And knowing Walsh,† would tell me I could write;
Well-natured Garth† inflamed with early praise,
And Congreve† loved, and Swift† endured my lays;
- 130
- 135

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Horace . . . *Maro* Horace, Roman satirist (65–8 ac); *Ovid* the elegist and Virgil (*Maro*) were his contemporaries; *Ammon*: Jupiter, claimed ancestor of Alexander the Great.
The references are to Pope's feebleness and deformity (cf. l. 132)
numbers verse: Pope wrote poetry in his early teens
Granville . . . *Dryden's friends* Pope places

himself socially and intellectually by the association with statesmen and writers:
George Granville, Lord Lansdowne, dedicatee of *Windsor Forest*; William Walsh, Pope's early adviser; Sir Samuel Garth, poet; Congreve, the dramatist; Swift and his friend Lord Somers; Charles Talbot, Duke of Shrewsbury; Lord Sheffield; Francis Atterbury, Bishop of Rochester; Henry St. John, Viscount Bolingbroke, addressee of *An Essay on Man*

- 140 The courtly Talbot,[†] Somers,[†] Sheffield,[†] read;
Even mitred Rochester[†] would nod the head,
And St John's[†] self (great Dryden's friends[†] before)
With open arms received one poet more.
Happy my studies, when by these approved!
Happier their author, when by these beloved!
From these the world will judge of men and books,
Not from the Burnets, Oldmixons, and Cookes.[†]
Soft were my numbers; who could take offence
While pure description held the place of sense?
Like gentle Fanny's[†] was my flowery theme,
A painted mistress, or a purling stream.
145 Yet then did Gildon[†] draw his vernal quill;
I wished the man a dinner, and sat still.
Yet then did Dennis[†] rave in furious fret;
I never answered, I was not in debt.
150 If want provoked, or madness made them print,
I waged no war with Bedlam or the Mint.
Did some more sober critic come abroad?
If wrong, I smiled; if right, I kissed the rod.
Pains, reading, study are their just pretence,
And all they want is spirit, taste, and sense.
155 Commas and points[†] they set exactly right,
And 'twere a sin to rob them of their mite.
Yet ne'er one sprig of laurel graced these ribalds,
From slashing Bentley[†] down to piddling Tibbalds.[†]
160 Each wight who reads not, and but scans and spells,
Each word-catcher that lives on syllables,
Even such small critics some regard may claim,
Preserved in Milton's or in Shakespeare's name.
Pretty! in amber to observe the forms
Of hairs, or straws, or dirt, or grubs, or worms;
The things, we know, are neither rich nor rare,
But wonder how the devil they got there.
Were others angry? I excused them too;
Well might they rage; I gave them but their due.
175 A man's true merit 'tis not hard to find;
But each man's secret standard in his mind,

Burnets . . . *Cookes* called by P. 'authors of
... scandalous history'
Fanny the effeminate Lord Hervey, the *Sporus*
of 1.305
Gildon . . . *Dennis* Charles Gildon and John
Dennis were critics associated with Addison

points . . . *Tibbalds* full stops, the concern of
textual critics like Richard Bentley, editor of
Paradise Lost, and Lewis Theobald, critic of
Pope's Shakespeare edition, and original hero
of *The Dunciad*

- 180 That casting weight pride adds to emptiness,
This, who can gratify? for who can guess?
The bard[†] whom pilfered pastorals renown,
Who turns a Persian tale for half a crown,[†]
Just writes to make his barrenness appear,
And strains from hard-bound brains eight lines a year:
He who still wanting, though he lives on theft,
Steals much, spends little, yet has nothing left;
185 And he who now to sense, now nonsense leaning,
Means not, but blunders round about a meaning:
And he whose fustian's so sublimely bad,
It is not poetry, but prose run mad:
All these, my modest satire bade translate,
And owned that nine such poets made a Tate.[†]
190 How did they fume, and stamp, and roar, and chafe!
And swear, not Addison[†] himself was safe.
Peace to all such! but were there one whose fires
True Genius kindles, and fair Fame inspires,
195 Blessed with each talent and each art to please,
And born to write, converse, and live with ease:
Should such a man, too fond to rule alone,
Bear, like the Turk,[†] no brother near the throne,
View him with scornful, yet with jealous eyes,
200 And hate for arts that caused himself to rise;
Damn with faint praise, assent with civil leer,
And without sneering, teach the rest to sneer;
Willing to wound, and yet afraid to strike,
Just hint a fault, and hesitate dislike;
205 Alike reserved to blame or to commend,
A timorous foe, and a suspicious friend,
Dreading even fools, by flatterers besieged,
And so obliging that he ne'er obliged;
Like Cato,[†] give his little senate laws,
210 And sit attentive to his own applause;
While wits and Templars[†] every sentence raise,
And wonder with a foolish face of praise.

The bard Ambrose Philips (1.99) wrote
pastorals and translated Persian tales
half a crown a whore's charge
Tate Nahum Tate, Poet Laureate 1692–1715,
had written Part II of Dryden's *Absalom*
Addison sketched as Atticus (originally a
Roman man of letters): poet, essayist and
statesman, he had seemed jealous of the rise
of Pope; and in the coffee-house was like the
hero of his own drama *Cato* (1713)
the Turk Turkish rulers murdered relatives as
potential rivals
Cato see note on Addison, above
Templars lawyers: the Temple contained Inns
of Court

Who but must laugh, if such a man there be?

Who would not weep, if Atticus[†] were he?

215 What though my name stood rubric[†] on the walls,

Or plastered posts, with claps^{*} in capitals?

Or smoking forth, a hundred hawkers' load,

On wings of winds came flying all abroad?

I sought no homage from the race that write;

220 I kept, like Asian monarchs, from their sight:

Poems I heeded (now be-rhymed so long)

No more than thou, great George![†] a birthday song.

I ne'er with wits or wittings passed my days

To spread about the itch of verse and praise;

225 Nor like a puppy daggled through the town

To fetch and carry sing-song up and down;

Nor at rehearsals sweat, and mouthed, and cried,

With handkerchief and orange at my side:

But sick of fops, and poetry, and prate,

230 To Bufo[†] left the whole Castalian[†] state.

Proud as Apollo[†] on his forkèd hill,

Sat full-blown Bufo, puffed by every quill;

Fed with soft dedication all day long,

Horace and he went hand in hand in song.

235 His library (where busts of poets dead

And a true Pindar[†] stood without a head)

Received of wits an undistinguished race,

Who first his judgment asked, and then a place.^{*}

Much they extolled his pictures, much his seat,[†]

240 And flattered every day, and some days eat:

Till grown more frugal in his riper days,

He paid some bards with port, and some with praise,

To some a dry rehearsal was assigned,

And others (harder still) he paid in kind.

245 Dryden alone (what wonder?) came not nigh,

Dryden alone escaped this judging eye:

But still the great have kindness in reserve;

He helped to bury whom he helped to starve.[†]

May some choice patron bless each gray goose quill!

250 May every Bavius have his Bufo still!

posters

employment

Atticus see note on Addison, above
rubric advertised in red
George George II, recipient of poems by the Laureate
Bufo . . . *Apollo* toad (Latin): a puffed-up patron; the *Castalian* spring on Mt Parnassus
 was sacred to *Apollo*, god of poetry, and the Muses
Pindar Greek lyric poet
seat (country) estate
starve Dryden, after a life of poverty, had a fine funeral

So when a statesman wants a day's defence,

Or envy holds a whole week's war with sense,

Or simple pride for flattery makes demands,

255 May dunces by dunces be whistled off my hands!

Blessed be the great! for those they take away,

And those they left me – for they left me Gay;

Left me to see neglected genius bloom,

Neglected die! and tell it on his tomb;[†]

Of all thy blameless life the sole return

260 My verse, and Queensberry weeping o'er thy urn!

Oh let me live my own, and die so too!

('To live and die is all I have to do'[†])

Maintain a poet's dignity and ease,

And see what friends, and read what books I please.

265 Above a patron, though I condescend

Sometimes to call a minister my friend:

I was not born for courts or great affairs,

I pay my debts, believe, and say my prayers,

Can sleep without a poem in my head,

270 Nor know if Dennis be alive or dead.

Why am I asked what next shall see the light?

Heavens! was I born for nothing but to write?

Has life no joys for me? or (to be grave)

Have I no friend to serve, no soul to save?

275 'I found him close with Swift' – 'Indeed? no doubt'

(Cries prating Balbus) 'something will come out.'

'Tis all in vain, deny it as I will.

'No, such a genius never can lie still,'

And then for mine obligingly mistakes

280 The first lampoon Sir Will[†] or Bubo[†] makes.

Poor guiltless I! and can I choose but smile,

When every coxcomb knows me by my style?

Cursed be the verse, how well soe'er it flow,

That tends to make one worthy man my foe,

285 Give virtue scandal, innocence a fear,

Or from the soft-eyed virgin steal a tear!

But he who hurts a harmless neighbour's peace,

Insults fallen worth, or beauty in distress,

tomb Pope wrote his epitaph; Gay was helped by the Duke and Duchess of Queensberry, not the court
Sir Will Sir William Yonge
Bubo Bubb Dodington; both politicians of modest literary taste
 'To live . . . to do' from Sir John Denham (1615–69), *Of Prudence*

- 290 Who loves a lie, lame slander helps about,
 Who writes a libel, or who copies out:
 That fop whose pride affects a patron's name,
 Yet absent, wounds an author's honest fame;
 Who can your merit selfishly approve,
 And show the sense of it without the love;
 Who has the vanity to call you friend,
 Yet wants the honour, injured, to defend;
 Who tells whate'er you think, whate'er you say,
 And, if he lie not, must at least betray:
 Who to the dean[†] and silver bell[†] can swear,
 And sees at Cannons[†] what was never there;
 Who reads but with a lust to misapply,
 Make satire a lampoon, and fiction, lie:
 A lash like mine no honest man shall dread,
 But all such babbling blockheads in his stead.
 305 Let Sporus[†] tremble — 'What? that thing of silk,
 Sporus, that mere white curd of ass's milk?
 Satire or sense, alas! can Sporus feel?
 Who breaks a butterfly upon a wheel?'[†]
 Yet let me flap this bug with gilded wings,
 This painted child of dirt, that stinks and stings;
 Whose buzz the witty and the fair annoys,
 Yet wit ne'er tastes, and beauty ne'er enjoys;
 So well-bred spaniels civilly delight
 In mumbling of the game they dare not bite.
 315 Eternal smiles his emptiness betray,
 As shallow streams run dimpling all the way.
 Whether in florid impotence he speaks,
 And, as the prompter breathes, the puppet squeaks;
 Or at the ear of Eve, familiar road,[†]
 Half froth, half venom, spits himself abroad,
 In puns, or politics, or tales, or lies,
 Or spite, or smut, or rhymes, or blasphemies.
 His wit all seesaw between that and this,
 Now high, now low, now master up, now miss,
 325 And he himself one vile antithesis.
- dean, bell, Cannons* details from Pope's
Epistle to Burlington (1731), wrongly
 understood to refer to Cannons, estate of the
 Duke of Chandos
Sporus boy lover of the Roman Emperor
 Nero; here, Lord Hervey (1696–1743), who
 aided Lady Mary Wortley Montagu in the
 vicious attacks which provoked publication
 of this poem. An effeminate courtier, he is
 seen as Satan to Queen Caroline's Eve (l.319)
wheel an instrument of human torture
road Pope's note refers us to *Paradise Lost*,
 14,800

- Amphibious[†] thing! that acting either part,
 The trifling head or the corrupted heart,
 Fop at the toilet, flatterer at the board,
 Now trips a lady, and now struts a lord.
 330 Eve's tempter thus the rabbins[†] have expressed,
 A cherub's face, a reptile all the rest;
 Beauty that shocks you, parts that none will trust,
 Wit that can creep, and pride that licks the dust.
 Not fortune's worshipper, nor fashion's fool,
 335 Not lucre's madman, nor ambition's tool,
 Not proud, nor servile, be one poet's praise,
 That, if he pleased, he pleased by manly ways;
 That flattery, even to kings, he held a shame,
 And thought a lie in verse or prose the same:
 340 That not in fancy's maze he wandered long,
 But stooped[†] to truth, and moralized his song;
 That not for fame, but virtue's better end,
 He stood the furious foe, the timid friend,
 The damning critic, half-approving wit,
 345 The coxcomb hit, or fearing to be hit;
 Laughed at the loss of friends he never had,
 The dull, the proud, the wicked, and the mad;
 The distant threats of vengeance on his head,
 The blow unfelt, the tear he never shed;
 350 The tale revived, the lie so oft o'erthrown,
 Th' imputed trash, and dullness not his own;
 The morals blackened when the writings 'scape,
 The libelled person, and the pictured[†] shape;
 Abuse on all he loved, or loved him, spread,
 355 A friend in exile,[†] or a father dead;
 The whisper, that to greatness still too near,
 Perhaps, yet vibrates on his Sovereign's ear —
 Welcome for thee, fair virtue! all the past:
 For thee, fair virtue! welcome even the last!
 360 'But why insult the poor, affront the great?'
 A knave's a knave to me in every state;
 Alike my scorn, if he succeed or fail,
 Sporus at court, or Japhet[†] in a jail,

Amphibious like other detail, hints at
 bisexuality
rabbins Jewish scholars
stooped as a falcon swoops down on its prey
pictured his deformity had been drawn as that
 of a hunchbacked ape
in exile Atterbury (l.140: 1662–1732), who
 had first been imprisoned for Jacobite
 conspiracy
Japhet Japhet Crook, a forger, punished by
 ear-slitting

- 365 A hireling scribbler, or a hireling peer,
Knight of the post[†] corrupt, or of the shire,[†]
If on a pillory, or near a throne,
He gain his prince's ear, or lose his own.
Yet soft by nature, more a dupe than wit,
Sappho[†] can tell you how this man was bit;[†]
This dreaded satirist Dennis will confess
- 370 Foe to his pride, but friend to his distress:
So humble, he has knocked at Tibbald's door,
Has drunk with Cibber, nay has rhymed for Moore.
Full ten years slandered, did he once reply?
Three thousand suns went down on Welsted's[†] lie;
To please a mistress, one aspersed his life;
He lashed him not, but let her be his wife.
Let Budgell[†] charge low Grub Street on his quill,
And write what'er he pleased, except his will;
Let the two Curlls[†] of town and court abuse
His father, mother, body, soul, and muse.
Yet why? that father held it for a rule
It was a sin to call our neighbour fool;
That harmless mother thought no wife a whore:
Hear this, and spare his family, James Moore!
Unspotted names! and memorable long,
If there be force in virtue, or in song.
Of gentle blood[†] (part shed in honour's cause,
While yet in Britain honour had applause)
Each parent sprung – 'What fortune, pray?' – Their own,
And better got than Bestia's[†] from the throne.
Born to no pride, inheriting no strife,
Nor marrying discord in a noble wife,
Stranger to civil and religious rage,
The good man walked innoxious through his age.
No courts he saw, no suits would ever try,
Nor dared an oath,[†] nor hazarded a lie:
Unlearn'd, he knew no schoolman's* subtle art,
No language but the language of the heart.

theologian

Knight of the post giver of false evidence
Knight of the shire a county MP
Sappho again, Lady Mary
bit taken in
Welsted the poet Leonard Welsted had
accused him of callousness to others
Budgell Eustace Budgell identified Pope as
accusing him in the Grub Street Journal of
forging a will

two Curlls the original and Lord Hervey
gentle blood Hervey's jibe of 'birth obscure'
had stung Pope, whose father was a draper
Bestia a bribed Roman consul, here probably
the Duke of Marlborough, liberally rewarded
by Queen Anne
oath his father suffered anti-Catholic penalties
by refusing to take the oath against the Pope

- 400 By nature honest, by experience wise,
Healthy by temperance and by exercise;
His life, though long, to sickness passed unknown,
His death was instant, and without a groan.
Oh grant me thus to live, and thus to die!
Who sprung from kings shall know less joy than I.
O friend! may each domestic bliss be thine!
Be no unpleasing melancholy mine:
Me, let the tender office long engage
To rock the cradle of reposing age,
With lenient arts extend a mother's breath,
Make languor smile, and smooth the bed of death,[†]
Explore the thought, explain the asking eye,
And keep awhile one parent from the sky!
On cares like these if length of days attend,
May heaven, to bless those days, preserve my friend,[†]
Preserve him social, cheerful, and serene,
And just as rich as when he served a queen!
Whether that blessing be denied or given,
Thus far was right, the rest belongs to Heaven.

1731–4

1735

death his mother died in 1733, before this poem was published
friend Arbuthnot, who had attended Queen Anne

Lady Mary Wortley Montagu

1689–1762

Lady Mary Pierrepont, a cousin of Henry Fielding, defied her father, the Earl of Kingston, to marry for love the politician and businessman Edward Wortley Montagu. (She later lived over twenty years apart from him on the Continent.) A learned, independent and witty woman, she moved in fashionable social and literary circles, having some reputation from her *Court Poems* (1716). An early friendship with Pope turned to bitter attacks on both sides (see his references to 'Sappho' in *Epistle to Arbuthnot* and *To a Lady*). She is now best remembered for her letters, which reveal a worldly, open-minded intelligence. Her husband was ambassador to Turkey 1716–18, which with her later travels provided a rich vein of material. (The French painter Ingres was influenced by the descriptions in several of her Turkish letters.) Her daughter married the future Prime Minister, Lord Bute.

From LETTERS

To the Countess of Mar

[*Turkish Women*]

Adrianople, 1 April 1717

I wish to God (dear sister) that you was as regular in letting me have the pleasure of knowing what passes on your side of the globe as I am careful in endeavouring to amuse you by the account of all I see that I think you care to hear of. You content yourself with telling me over and over that the town is very dull. It may possibly be dull to you when everyday does not present you with something new, but for me that am in arrears at least two months' news, all that seems very stale with you would be fresh and sweet here; pray let me into more particulars. I will try to awaken your gratitude by giving you a full and true relation of the novelties of this place, none of which would surprise you more than a sight of my person as I am now in my Turkish habit, though I believe you would be of my opinion that 'tis admirably becoming. I

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intend to send you my picture; in the meantime accept of it here.

The first piece of my dress is a pair of drawers, very full, that reach to my shoes and conceal the legs more modestly than your petticoats. They are of a thin, rose-colour damask brocaded with silver flowers, my shoes of white kid leather embroidered with gold. Over this hangs my smock of a fine white silk gauze edged with embroidery. This smock has wide sleeves hanging half-way down the arm and is closed at the neck with a diamond button, but the shape and colour of the bosom very well to be distinguished through it. The *antery* is a waistcoat made close to the shape, of white and gold damask, with very long sleeves falling back and fringed with deep gold fringe, and should have diamond or pearl buttons. My caftan of the same stuff with my drawers is a robe exactly fitted to my shape and reaching to my feet, with very long strait falling sleeves. Over this is the girdle of about four fingers broad, which all that can afford have entirely of diamonds or other precious stones. Those that will not be at that expense have it of exquisite embroidery on satin, but it must be fastened before with a clasp of diamonds. The *curdée* is a loose robe they throw off or put on according to the weather, being of a rich brocade (mine is green and gold) either lined with ermine or sables; the sleeves reach very little below the shoulders.

The head-dress is composed of a cap called *talpack*, which is in winter of fine velvet embroidered with pearls or diamonds and in summer of a light, shining silver stuff. This is fixed on one side of the head, hanging a little way down with a gold tassel and bound on either with a circle of diamonds (as I have seen several) or a rich embroidered handkerchief. On the other side of the head the hair is laid flat, and here the ladies are at liberty to show their fancies, some putting flowers, others a plume of heron's feathers, and, in short, what they please, but the most general fashion is a large bouquet of jewels made like natural flowers, that is, the buds of pearl, the roses of different coloured rubies, the jasmynes of diamonds, jonquils of topazes, etc., so well set and enamelled 'tis hard to imagine anything of that kind so beautiful. The hair hangs at its full length behind, divided into tresses braided with pearl or riband, which is always in great quantity.

I never saw in my life so many fine heads of hair. I have counted one hundred and ten of these tresses of one lady's, all natural; but it must be owned that every beauty is more common here than with us. 'Tis suprising to see a young woman that is not very handsome. They have naturally the most beautiful complexions in the world and generally large black eyes. I can assure you with great truth that the Court of England (though I believe it the fairest in Christendom) cannot show so many beauties as are under our protection here. They generally shape their eyebrows, and the Greeks and Turks have a custom of putting round their eyes on the inside a black tincture that, at a distance or by

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candlelight, adds very much to the blackness of them. I fancy many of our ladies would be overjoyed to know this secret, but 'tis too visible by day. They dye their nails rose colour; I own I cannot enough accustom myself to this fashion to find any beauty in it.

As to their morality or good conduct, I can say like Harlequin, 'Tis just as 'tis with you'; and the Turkish ladies don't commit one sin the less for not being Christians. Now I am a little acquainted with their ways, I cannot forbear admiring either the exemplary discretion or extreme stupidity of all the writers that have given accounts of 'em. 'Tis very easy to see they have more liberty than we have, no woman of what rank soever being permitted to go in the streets without two muslins, one that covers her face all but her eyes and another that hides the whole dress of her head and hangs half-way down her back; and their shapes are wholly concealed by a thing they call a *ferigée*, which no woman of any sort appears without. This has strait sleeves that reach to their fingers' ends and it laps all round 'em, not unlike a riding hood. In winter 'tis of cloth, and in summer, plain stuff or silk. You may guess how effectually this disguises them, that there is no distinguishing the great lady from her slave, and 'tis impossible for the most jealous husband to know his wife when he meets her, and no man dare either touch or follow a woman in the street.

This perpetual masquerade gives them entire liberty of following their inclinations without danger of discovery. The most usual method of intrigue is to send an appointment to the lover to meet the lady at a Jew's shop, which are as notoriously convenient as our Indian houses, and yet even those that don't make that use of 'em do not scruple to go to buy penn'orths and tumble over rich goods, which are chiefly to be found amongst that sort of people. The great ladies seldom let their gallants know who they are, and 'tis so difficult to find it out that they can very seldom guess at her name they have corresponded with above half a year together.

You may easily imagine the number of faithful wives very small in a country where they have nothing to fear from their lovers' indiscretion, since we see so many that have the courage to expose themselves to that in this world and all the threatened punishment of the next, which is never preached to the Turkish damsels. Neither have they much to apprehend from the resentment of their husbands, those ladies that are rich having all their money in their own hands, which they take with 'em upon a divorce with an addition which he is obliged to give 'em. Upon the whole, I look upon the Turkish women as the only free people in the empire. The very Divan[†] pays a respect to 'em, and the Grand

Divan council of state

Signior[†] himself, when a pasha[†] is executed, never violates the privileges of the harem (or women's apartment) which remains unsearched entire to the widow. They are queens of their slaves, which the husband has no permission so much as to look upon, except it be an old woman or two that his lady chooses. 'Tis true their law permits them four wives, but there is no instance of a man of quality that makes use of this liberty, or of a woman of rank that would suffer it. When a husband happens to be inconstant (as those things will happen) he keeps his mistress in a house apart and visits her as privately as he can, just as 'tis with you. Amongst all the great men here I only know the *teferdar* (i.e. treasurer) that keeps a number of she slaves for his own use (that is, on his own side of the house, for a slave once given to serve a lady is entirely at her disposal), and he is spoke of as a libertine, or what we should call a rake, and his wife won't see him, though she continues to live in his house.

Thus you see, dear sister, the manners of mankind do not differ so widely as our voyage writers would make us believe. Perhaps it would be more entertaining to add a few surprising customs of my own invention, but nothing seems to me so agreeable as truth, and I believe nothing so acceptable to you. I conclude with repeating the great truth of my being, dear sister, etc.

To Sarah Chiswell

[*Inoculation against Smallpox*][†]

Adrianople, 1 April 1717

... Apropos of distempers, I am going to tell you a thing that I am sure will make you wish yourself here. The smallpox, so fatal and so general amongst us, is here entirely harmless by the invention of engraving (which is the term they give it). There is a set of old women who make it their business to perform the operation. Every autumn, in the month of September, when the great heat is abated, people send to one another to know if any of their family has a mind to have the smallpox. They make parties for this purpose, and when they are met (commonly fifteen or sixteen together) the old woman comes with a nutshell full of the matter of the best sort of smallpox and asks what

Grand Signior Sultan (Turkish ruler)

pasha high-ranking officer

Inoculation Against Smallpox Lady Mary,

whose beauty had been attacked by smallpox,

was largely responsible for the introduction in Britain of inoculation against the disease. Ironically, Sarah Chiswell died of smallpox in 1726

veins you please to have opened. She immediately rips open that you offer to her with a large needle (which gives you no more pain than a common scratch) and puts into the vein as much venom as can lie upon the head of her needle, and after binds up the little wound with a hollow bit of shell, and in this manner opens four or five veins. The Grecians have commonly the superstition of opening one in the middle of the forehead, in each arm, and on the breast to mark the sign of the cross, but this has a very ill effect, all these wounds leaving little scars, and is not done by those that are not superstitious, who choose to have them in the legs or that part of the arm that is concealed. The children or young patients play together all the rest of the day and are in perfect health till the eighth. Then the fever begins to seize 'em and they keep their beds two days, very seldom three. They have very rarely above twenty or thirty in their faces, which never mark, and in eight days' time they are as well as before their illness. Where they are wounded there remains running sores during the distemper, which I don't doubt is a great relief to it. Every year thousands undergo this operation, and the French ambassador says pleasantly that they take the smallpox here by way of diversion as they take the waters in other countries. There is no example of anyone that has died in it, and you may believe I am very well satisfied of the safety of the experiment since I intend to try it on my dear little son. I am patriot enough to take pains to bring this useful invention into fashion in England, and I should not fail to write to some of our doctors very particularly about it if I knew any one of 'em that I thought had virtue enough to destroy such a considerable branch of their revenue for the good of mankind, but that distemper is too beneficial to them not to expose to all their resentment the hardy wight that should undertake to put an end to it. Perhaps if I live to return I may, however, have courage to war with 'em. Upon this occasion, admire the heroism in the heart of your friend, etc.

To the Countess of Mar

[*Female Society in Turkey*]

Adrianople, 18 April 1717

I writ to you (dear sister) and to all my other English correspondents by the last ship, and only Heaven can tell when I shall have another opportunity of sending to you; but I cannot forbear writing, though perhaps my letter may lie upon my hands this two months. To confess the truth, my head is so full of my entertainment yesterday that 'tis absolutely necessary for my own repose to give it some vent. Without farther preface I will then begin my story.

I was invited to dine with the Grand Vizier's^t lady, and 'twas with a great deal of pleasure I prepared myself for an entertainment which was never given before to any Christian. I thought I should very little satisfy her curiosity (which I did not doubt was a considerable motive to the invitation) by going in a dress she was used to see, and therefore dressed myself in the court habit of Vienna, which is much more magnificent than ours. However, I chose to go *incognito* to avoid any disputes about ceremony, and went in a Turkish coach only attended by my woman that held up my train, and the Greek lady who was my interpreter. I was met at the court door by her black eunuch, who helped me out of the coach with great respect and conducted me through several rooms, where her she-slaves, finely dressed, were ranged on each side. In the innermost, I found the lady sitting on her sofa in a sable vest. She advanced to meet me and presented me half a dozen of her friends with great civility. She seemed a very good woman, near fifty year old. I was surprised to observe so little magnificence in her house, the furniture being all very moderate; and except the habits and number of her slaves nothing about her appeared expensive. She guessed at my thoughts and told me she was no longer of an age to spend either her time or money in superfluities; that her whole expense was in charity, and her employment praying to God. There was no affectation in this speech; both she and her husband are entirely given up to devotion. He never looks upon any other woman; and, what is much more extraordinary, touches no bribes, notwithstanding the example of all his predecessors. He is so scrupulous on this point, he would not accept Mr Wortley's present, till he had been assured over and over 'twas a settled perquisite of his place at the entrance of every ambassador.

She entertained me with all kind of civility till dinner came in, which was served one dish at a time, to a vast number, all finely dressed after their manner, which I do not think so bad as you have perhaps heard it represented. I am a very good judge of their eating, having lived three weeks in the house of an *effendi* at Belgrade who gave us very magnificent dinners dressed by his own cooks, which the first week pleased me extremely; but I own I then begun to grow weary of it, and desired my own cook might add a dish or two after our manner, but I attribute this to custom. I am very much inclined to believe that an Indian that had never tasted of either would prefer their cookery to ours. Their sauces are very high, all the roast very much done. They use a great deal of rich spice. The soup is served for the last dish; and they have at least as great a variety of ragouts^t as we have. I was very sorry I could not eat of as many as the good lady would have had me, who was very earnest in serving me of every thing. The treat concluded

Grand Vizier chief minister

ragouts stewed meats

50 with coffee and perfumes, which is a high mark of respect; two slaves kneeling censed my hair, clothes and handkerchief. After this ceremony, she commanded her slaves to play and dance, which they did with their guitars in their hands, and she excused to me their want of skill, saying she took no care to accomplish them in the art. I returned her thanks, and soon after took my leave.

55 I was conducted back in the same manner I entered, and would have gone straight to my own house; but the Greek lady with me earnestly solicited me to visit the *kıyaya's* lady, saying he was the second officer in the empire and ought indeed to be looked upon as the first, the Grand Vizier having only the name while he exercised the authority. I had found so little diversion in this *harem*,[†] that I had no mind to go into another, but her importunity prevailed with me, and I am extremely glad that I was so complaisant. All things here were with quite another air than at the Grand Vizier's, and the very house confessed the difference between an old devotee and a young beauty. It was nicely clean and magnificent. I was met at the door by two black eunuchs who led me through a long gallery between two ranks of beautiful young girls with their hair finely plaited, almost hanging to their feet, all dressed in fine light damasks brocaded with silver. I was sorry that decency did not permit me to stop to consider them nearer, but that thought was lost upon my entrance into a large room, or rather pavilion, built round with gilded sashes, which were most of 'em thrown up; and the trees planted near them gave an agreeable shade, which hindered the sun from being troublesome, the jessamines and honeysuckles that twisted round their trunks, shedding a soft perfume increased by a white marble fountain playing sweet water in the lower part of the room, which fell into three or four basins with a pleasing sound. The roof was painted with all sorts of flowers falling out of gilded baskets that seemed tumbling down.

80 On a sofa, raised three steps and covered with fine Persian carpets, sat the *kıyaya's* lady, leaning on cushions of white satin, embroidered; and at her feet sat two young girls about twelve year old, lovely as angels, dressed perfectly rich, and almost covered with jewels. But they were hardly seen near the fair Fatima (for that is her name), so much her beauty effaced every thing. I have seen all that has been called lovely either in England or Germany, and must own that I never saw anything so gloriously beautiful, nor can I recollect a face that would have been taken notice of near hers. She stood up to receive me, saluting me after their fashion, putting her hand to her heart with a sweetness full of majesty that no court breeding could ever give. She ordered cushions to be given me and took care to place me in the corner, which is the

harem women's quarters

place of honour. I confess, though the Greek lady had before given me a great opinion of her beauty, I was so struck with admiration, that I could not for some time speak to her, being wholly taken up in gazing. That surprising harmony of features! that charming result of the whole! that exact proportion of body! that lovely bloom of complexion unsullied by art! the unutterable enchantment of her smile! But her eyes! large and black, with all the soft languishment of the blue! every turn of her face discovering some new charm! After my first surprise was over, I endeavoured by nicely[†] examining her face, to find out some imperfection, without any fruit of my search but being clearly convinced of the error of that vulgar notion, that a face perfectly regular would not be agreeable, nature having done for her with more success what Apelles[†] is said to have essayed, by a collection of the most exact features to form a perfect face, and to that a behaviour so full of grace and sweetness, such easy motions, with an air so majestic yet free from stiffness or affectation that I am persuaded, could she be suddenly transported upon the most polite throne of Europe, nobody would think her other than born and bred to be a queen, though educated in a country we call barbarous. To say all in a word, our most celebrated English beauties would vanish near her.

She was dressed in a *caftan* of gold brocade flowered with silver, very well fitted to her shape and showing to admiration the beauty of her bosom, only shaded by the thin gauze of her shift. Her drawers were pale pink, green and silver; her slippers white, finely embroidered; her lovely arms adorned with bracelets of diamonds, and her broad girdle set round with diamonds; upon her head a rich Turkish handkerchief of pink and silver, her own fine black hair hanging a great length in various tresses, and on one side of her head some bodkins of jewels. I am afraid you will accuse me of extravagance in this description. I think I have read somewhere that women always speak in rapture when they speak of beauty, but I can't imagine why they should not be allowed to do so. I rather think it virtue to be able to admire without any mixture of desire or envy. The gravest writers have spoken with great warmth of some celebrated pictures and statues. The workmanship of Heaven certainly excels all our weak imitations, and I think has a much better claim to our praise. For me, I am not ashamed to own I took more pleasure in looking on the beautiful Fatima, than the finest piece of sculpture could have given me. She told me the two girls at her feet were her daughters, though she appeared too young to be their mother.

Her fair maids were ranged below the sofa to the number of twenty, and put me in mind of the pictures of the ancient nymphs. I did not think all nature could have furnished such a scene of beauty. She made

nicely closely

Apelles ancient Greek painter

135 them a sign to play and dance. Four of them immediately began to play some soft airs on instruments between a lute and a guitar, which they accompanied with their voices, while the others danced by turns. This dance was very different from what I had seen before. Nothing could be more artful, or more proper to raise certain ideas, the tunes so soft, the motions so languishing, accompanied with pauses and dying eyes, half-falling back, and then recovering themselves in so artful a manner that I am very positive the coldest and most rigid rude upon earth could not have looked upon them without thinking of something not to be spoke of. I suppose you may have read that the Turks have no music but what is shocking to the ears, but this account is from those who never heard any but what is played in the streets, and is just as reasonable as if a foreigner should take his ideas of English music from the *bladder and string*, or the *marrow bones and cleavers*. I can assure you that the music is extremely pathetic. 'Tis true I am inclined to prefer the Italian, but perhaps I am partial. I am acquainted with a Greek lady who sings better than Mrs Robinson,[†] and is very well skilled in both, who gives the preference to the Turkish. 'Tis certain they have very fine natural voices; these were very agreeable.

140 When the dance was over, four fair slaves came into the room with silver censers in their hands and perfumed the air with amber, aloes-wood, and other scents. After this they served me coffee upon their knees in the finest japan china, with soucoups of silver gilt. The lovely Fatima entertained me all this time in the most polite agreeable manner, calling me often *Uzelle Sultanam*, or the beautiful sultana, and desiring my friendship with the best grace in the world, lamenting that she could not entertain me in my own language. When I took my leave two maids brought in a fine silver basket of embroidered handkerchiefs. She begged I would wear the richest for her sake, and gave the others to my woman and interpreter. I retired through the same ceremonies as before, and could not help fancying I had been some time in Mahomet's paradise, so much was I charmed with what I had seen. I know not how the relation of it appears to you. I wish it may give you part of my pleasure; for I would have my dear sister share in all [my] diversions.

Mrs Robinson leading contemporary English singer

To the Countess of Bute [Female Education]

170

Dear Child,

You have given me a great deal of satisfaction by your account of your eldest daughter. I am particularly pleased to hear she is a good arithmetician; it is the best proof of understanding. The knowledge of numbers is one of the chief distinctions between us and brutes. If there is anything in blood you may reasonably expect your children should be endowed with an uncommon share of good sense. Mr Wortley's family and mine have both produced some of the greatest men that have been born in England. I mean Admiral Sandwich, and my grandfather who was distinguished by the name of Wise William. I have heard Lord Bute's father mentioned as an extraordinary genius (though he had not many opportunities of showing it), and his uncle the present Duke of Argyle has one of the best heads I ever knew.

I will therefore speak to you as supposing Lady Mary not only capable but desirous of learning. In that case, by all means let her be indulged in it. You will tell me, I did not make it a part of your education. Your prospect was very different from hers, as you had no defect either in mind or person to hinder, and much in your circumstances to attract, the highest offers. It seemed your business to learn how to live in the world, as it is hers to know how to be easy out of it. It is the common error of builders and parents to follow some plan they think beautiful (and perhaps is so) without considering that nothing is beautiful that is misplaced. Hence we see so many edifices raised that the raisers can never inhabit, being too large for their fortunes. Vistas are laid open over barren heaths, and apartments contrived for a coolness very agreeable in Italy but killing in the north of Britain. Thus every woman endeavours to breed her daughter a fine lady, qualifying her for a station in which she will never appear, and at the same time incapacitating her for that retirement to which she is destined. Learning (if she has a real taste for it) will not only make her contented but happy in it. No entertainment is so cheap as reading, nor any pleasure so lasting. She will not want new fashions nor regret the loss of expensive diversions or variety of company if she can be amused with an author in her closet. To render this amusement extensive, she should be permitted to learn the languages. I have heard it lamented that boys lose so many years in mere learning of words. This is no objection to a

Gottolengo for many years, Lady Mary lived at her house in Northern Italy

Gottolengo,[†] 28 January 1753

girl, whose time is not so precious. She cannot advance herself in any profession, and has therefore more hours to spare; and as you say her memory is good she will be very agreeably employed this way.

There are two cautions to be given on this subject: first, not to think herself learned when she can read Latin or even Greek. Languages are more properly to be called vehicles of learning than learning itself, as may be observed in many schoolmasters, who though perhaps critics in grammar are the most ignorant fellows upon earth. True knowledge consists in knowing things, not words. I would wish her no further a linguist than to enable her to read books in their originals, that are often corrupted and always injured by translations. Two hours application every morning will bring this about much sooner than you can imagine, and she will have leisure enough beside to run over the English poetry, which is a more important part of a woman's education than it is generally supposed. Many a young damsel has been ruined by a fine copy of verses, which she would have laughed at if she had known it had been stolen from Mr Waller.[†] I remember when I was a girl I saved one of my companions from destruction, who communicated to me an epistle she was quite charmed with. As she had a natural good taste she observed the lines were not so smooth as Prior's[‡] or Pope's, but had more thought and spirit than any of theirs. She was wonderfully delighted with such a demonstration of her lover's sense and passion, and not a little pleased with her own charms, that had force enough to inspire such elegancies. In the midst of this triumph I showed her they were taken from Randolph's[†] *Poems*, and the unfortunate transcriber was dismissed with the scorn he deserved. To say truth, the poor plagiary was very unlucky to fall into my hands; that author, being no longer in fashion, would have escaped anyone of less universal reading than myself. You should encourage your daughter to talk over with you what she reads, and as you are very capable of distinguishing, take care she does not mistake pert folly for wit and humour, or rhyme for poetry, which are the common errors of young people, and have a train of ill consequences.

The second caution to be given her (and which is most absolutely necessary) is to conceal whatever learning she attains, with as much solicitude as she would hide crookedness or lameness. The parade of it can only serve to draw on her the envy, and consequently the most inveterate hatred of all he and she fools, which will certainly be at least three parts in four of all her acquaintance. The use of knowledge in our sex (beside the amusement of solitude) is to moderate the passions and learn to be contented with a small expense, which are the certain

Waller Edmund Waller (1606–87)
Prior Matthew Prior (1664–1721)

Randolph Thomas Randolph (1605–35),
Poems, 1638

effects of a studious life and, it may be, preferable even to that fame which men have engrossed to themselves and will not suffer us to share. You will tell me I have not observed this rule myself, but you are mistaken; it is only inevitable accident that has given me any reputation that way. I have always carefully avoided it, and ever thought it a misfortune.

The explanation of this paragraph would occasion a long digression, which I will not trouble you with, it being my present design only to say what I think useful for the instruction of my granddaughter, which I have much at heart. If she has the same inclination (I should say passion) for learning that I was born with, history, geography, and philosophy will furnish her with materials to pass away cheerfully a longer life than is allotted to mortals. I believe there are few heads capable of making Sir Isaac Newton's calculations, but the result of them is not difficult to be understood by a moderate capacity. Do not fear this should make her affect the character of Lady —, or Lady —, or Mrs —. Those women are ridiculous not because they have learning but because they have it not. One thinks herself a complete historian after reading Echard's[†] *Roman History*, another a profound philosopher having got by heart some of Pope's unintelligible essays, and a third an able divine on the strength of Whitefield's[‡] sermons. Thus you hear them screaming politics and controversy. It is a saying of Thucydides:[†] Ignorance is bold, and knowledge reserved. Indeed it is impossible to be far advanced in it without being more humbled by a conviction of human ignorance than elated by learning.

At the same time I recommend books I neither exclude work nor drawing. I think it as scandalous for a woman not to know how to use a needle, as for a man not to know how to use a sword. I was once extreme fond of my pencil, and it was a great mortification to me when my father turned off my master, having made a considerable progress for the short time I learned. My over-eagerness in the pursuit of it had brought a weakness on my eyes that made it necessary to leave it off, and all the advantage I got was the improvement of my hand. I see by hers that practice will make her a ready writer. She may attain it by serving you for a secretary when your health or affairs make it troublesome to you to write yourself, and custom will make it an agreeable amusement to her. She cannot have too many for that station of life which will probably be her fate. The ultimate end of your education was to make you a good wife (and I have the comfort to hear that you are one); hers ought to be, to make her happy in a virgin state.

Echard Laurence Echard (?1670–1730),

British historian

Whitefield George Whitefield (1714–70),
methodist preacher

Thucydides c 460–395 bc Greek historian

110 I will not say it is happier, but it is undoubtedly safer than any marriage.
 120 In a lottery where there is (at the lowest computation) ten thousand
 blanks to a prize it is the most prudent choice not to venture.

125 I have always been so thoroughly persuaded of this truth that
 notwithstanding the flattering views I had for you (as I never intended
 you a sacrifice to my vanity) I thought I owed you the justice to lay
 before you all the hazards attending matrimony. You may recollect I
 did so in the strongest manner. Perhaps you may have more success in
 the instructing your daughter. She has so much company at home she
 will not need seeking it abroad, and will more readily take the notions
 you think fit to give her. As you were alone in my family, it would have
 been thought a great cruelty to suffer you no companions of your own
 130 age, especially having so many near relations, and I do not wonder
 their opinions influenced yours. I was not sorry to see you not determined
 on a single life, knowing it was not your father's intention, and contented
 myself with endeavouring to make your home so easy that you might
 not be in haste to leave it.

135 I am afraid you will think this a very long and insignificant letter. I
 hope the kindness of the design will excuse it, being willing to give you
 every proof in my power that I am your most affectionate mother,

M. Wortley

1763-7, 1965-7

Samuel Richardson

1689-1761

Humbly born near Derby, Richardson spent most of his life in London, rising from printer's apprentice to become a major figure in the trade, printer of the House of Commons Journals (1742) and Master of the Stationers' Company (1754-5). Out of his writing sample letters suitable for various occasions grew his first novel *Pamela* (1740), a young servant's account in letters and journal of her imprisonment and temptation by her master, who eventually recognises her merits and marries her. The vivid technique of 'writing to the moment' and the socially-challenging subject-matter made the novel one of the sensations of the century, with adaptations and sequels, though its prudential morality and detailing of trivia were attacked by Fielding (p. 295). The centre of a group of female admirers, Richardson was greatly praised by Johnson for his psychological insight. His masterpiece *Clarissa* (1747-8) takes a million words to recount in letters from various correspondents the heroine's moral struggles, rape, and triumphant death: a rare example of successful tragedy in this period. *Sir Charles Grandison* (1753-4), an epistolary novel about a 'good man', was adapted for domestic performance by Jane Austen, a later admirer of Richardson's insight, if not his prolixity. His interest in elaborating emotional conflict at the expense of story has left him the least read of the great novelists.

From PAMELA, OR VIRTUE REWARDED[†] [An Attack]

TUESDAY Night

For the future, I will always mistrust most, when appearances look fairest. O your poor daughter, what has she not suffered since Sunday night, the time of her worst trial, and fearfulest danger!

Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded Pamela keeps for
 her parents a detailed record of her
 imprisonment by her master, now in its

fortieth day, and of the close watch kept by
 Mrs Jewkes. Squire B. has seemingly gone off
 to Stamford

O how I shudder to write you an account of this wicked interval of time! For, my dear parents, will you not be too much frightened and affected with my distress, when I tell you, that his journey to Stamford was all abominable pretence? For he came home privately, and had well-nigh effected all his vile purposes in the ruin of your poor daughter; and that by such a plot as I was not in the least apprehensive of: and you'll hear what a vile unwomanly part that wicked wretch, Mrs Jewkes, acted in it.

Take the dreadful story as well as I can relate it.

The maid Nan is fond of liquor, if she can get at it; and Mrs Jewkes happened, or designed, as is too probable, to leave a bottle of cherry-brandy in her way, and the wench drank more of it than she should; and when she came to lay the cloth, Mrs Jewkes perceived it, and rated at^t her most sadly. The wretch has too many faults of her own, to suffer any of the like sort in any body else, if she can help it; and she bade her get out of her sight, when we had supped, and go to bed, to sleep off her liquor, before we came to bed. And so the poor maid went muttering up stairs.

About two hours after, which was near eleven o'clock, Mrs Jewkes and I went up to go to bed; I pleasing myself with what a charming night I should have. We locked both doors, and saw poor Nan, as I thought, sitting fast asleep, in an elbow-chair, in a dark corner of the room, with her apron thrown over her head and neck. But oh! it was my abominable master, as you shall hear by and by. And Mrs Jewkes said, 'There is that beast of a wench fast asleep! I knew she had taken a fine dose.' 'I will wake her,' said I. 'Let her sleep on,' answered she, 'we shall lie better without her.' 'So we shall,' said I; 'but won't she get cold?'

'I hope,' said the vile woman, 'you have no writing tonight.' 'No,' replied I, 'I will go to bed when you go, Mrs Jewkes.' 'That's right,' answered she; 'indeed I wonder what you can find to write about so continually. I am sure you have better conveniences of that kind, and more paper, than I am aware of. Indeed I had intended to rummage^t you, if my master had not come down; for I spied a broken tea-cup with ink, which gave me a suspicion: but as he is come, let him look after you, if he will. If you deceive him, it will be his own fault.'

All this time we were undressing; and I fetching a deep sigh, 'What do you sigh for?' said she. 'I am thinking, Mrs Jewkes,' answered I, 'what a sad life I live, and how hard is my lot. I am sure the thief that has robbed is much better off than I, bating^t the guilt; and I should, I

rated at scolded
rummage search

bating except for

think, take it for a mercy to be hanged out of the way, rather than live in these cruel apprehensions.'

So, being not sleepy, and in a prattling vein, I began to give a little history of myself, in this manner.

'My poor honest parents,' said I, 'in the first place, took care to instil good principles into my mind, till I was almost twelve years of age; and taught me to prefer goodness and poverty, if they could not be separated, to the highest condition; and they confirmed their lessons by their own practice; for they were of late years remarkably poor, and always as remarkably honest, even to a proverb; for, *As honest as Goodman ANDREWS*, was a bye-word.

'Well, then comes my late dear good lady, and takes a fancy to me, and said she would be the making of me, if I was a good girl: and she put me to sing, to dance, to play on the harpsichord, in order to divert her melancholy hours; and also taught me all manner of fine needle-works; but still this was her lesson, "*My good Pamela, be virtuous, and keep the men at a distance.*" Well, so I did; and yet, though I say it, they all respected me; and would do any thing for me, as if I were a gentlewoman.

'But then, what comes next? Why, it pleased God to take my good lady; and then comes my master: and what says he? Why, in effect, it is "*Be not virtuous, Pamela.*"

'So here have I lived above sixteen years in virtue and reputation; and, all at once, when I come to know what is good, and what is evil, I must renounce all the good, all the whole sixteen years innocence, which, next to God's grace, I owed chiefly to my parents and to my lady's good lessons and examples, and choose the evil; and so, in a moment's time, become the vilest of creatures! And all this, for what, I pray? Why, truly, for a pair of diamond earrings, a solitaire, a necklace, and a diamond ring for my finger; which would not become me: for a few paltry fine clothes; which, when I wore them, would make but my former poverty more ridiculous to every body that saw me; especially when they knew the base terms I wore them upon. But, indeed, I was to have a great parcel of guineas beside; I forget how many; for had there been ten times more, they would not have been so much to me, as the honest six guineas you tricked me out of, Mrs Jewkes.

'Well, but then I was to have I know not how many pounds a year for my life; and my poor father (fine encouragement indeed!) was to be the manager for the abandoned prostitute, his daughter: and then (there was the jest of it!) my kind, forgiving, virtuous master would pardon me all my misdeeds.

'And what, pray, are all these violent misdeeds? Why, they are, for daring to adhere to the good lessons that were taught me; for not being contented, when I was run away with, in order to be ruined; but

contriving, if my poor wits had been able, to get out of danger, and preserve myself honest.

90 'Then was he once jealous of poor John,[†] though he knew John was his own creature, and helped to deceive me.

'Then was he outrageous against poor Mr Williams;[‡] and him has this good, merciful master thrown into gaol! and for what? Why, truly, for that being a divine, and a good man, he was willing to forego all his expectations of interest, and assist a poor creature, whom he believed innocent!

95 'But, to be sure, I must be *forward, bold, saucy*, and what not, to dare to attempt an escape from certain ruin, and an unjust confinement. Poor Mr Williams! how was he drawn in to make marriage proposals to me! O Mrs Jewkes! what a trick was that! The honest gentleman would have had but a poor catch of me, had I consented to be his wife; but he, and *you* too, know I did not want to marry *any body*. I only wanted to go to my poor parents, and not to be laid under an unlawful restraint, and which would not have been attempted, but only that I am a poor destitute young creature, and have no friend that is able to right me.

100 'So here, Mrs Jewkes,' said I, 'have I given my history in brief. I am very unhappy: and whence my unhappiness? Why, because my master sees something in my person that takes his present fancy; and because I would not be ruined; why, therefore, to choose, I must, and I shall be ruined! And this is all the reason that can be given!'

105 She heard me run on all this time, while I was undressing, without any interruption; and I said, 'Well, I must go to the two closets, ever since an affair of the closet[†] at the other house, though he is so far off. And I have a good mind to wake this poor maid.' 'No, don't,' said she, 'I charge you. I am very angry with her, and she'll get no harm there; and if she wakes, she will find her way to bed well enough, as there is a candle in the chimney.'

110 So I looked into the closets; and kneeled down in my own, as I used to do, to say my prayers, and this with my under clothes in my hand; and passed by the supposed sleeping wench, in my return. But little did I think, it was my wicked, wicked master in a gown and petticoat of hers, and her apron over his face and shoulders. To what meannesses will not Lucifer makes: his votaries stoop, to gain their abominable ends!

115 Mrs Jewkes by this time was got to bed, on the further side, as she used to do; and I lay close to her, to make room for the maid, when she should awake. 'Where are the keys?' said I, 'and yet I am not so

much afraid tonight.' 'Here,' said the wicked woman, 'put your arm under mine, and you shall find them about my wrist, as they used to be.' I did so, and the abominable designer held my hand with her right hand, as my right arm was under her left.

120 In less than a quarter of an hour, hearing the supposed maid in motion, 'Poor Nan is awake,' said I; 'I hear her stir.' 'Let us go to sleep,' replied she, 'and not mind her: she'll come to bed, when she's quite awake.' 'Poor soul!' said I, 'I'll warrant she will have the headache finely tomorrow for this.' 'Be silent,' answered she, 'and go to sleep; you keep me awake. I never found you in so talkative a humour in my life.' 'Don't chide me,' said I; 'I will say but one thing more: do you think Nan could hear me talk of my master's offers?' 'No, no,' replied she, 'she was dead asleep.' 'I am glad of that,' said I; 'because I would not expose my master to his common servants; and I knew you were no stranger to his *fine* articles.'[†] 'I think they *were* fine articles,' replied she, 'and you were bewitched you did not close with them: but let us go to sleep.'

125 So I was silent: and the pretended Nan (O wicked, base, villainous designer! what a plot, what an unexpected plot was this!) seemed to be awaking; and Mrs Jewkes, abhorred creature! said, 'Come, Nan! What, are you awake at last? Prithce come to bed, for Mrs Pamela is in a talking fit, and won't go to sleep one while.'

130 At that, the pretended she came to the bed-side; and sitting down in a chair concealed by the curtain, began to undress. 'Poor Mrs Ann,' said I, 'I warrant your head aches most sadly! How do you do?' No answer was returned. 'You know I have ordered her not to answer you,' said the abominably wicked woman: this plot, to be sure, was laid when she gave her these orders the night before.

135 The pretended Nan (how shocking to relate!) then came into bed, trembling like an aspen-leaf; and I (poor fool that I was!) pitied her much. But well might the barbarous deceiver tremble at his vile dissimulation, and base designs.

140 What words shall I find, my dear mother, (for my father should not see this shocking part) to describe the rest, and my confusion, when the guilty wretch took my left arm, and laid it under his neck as the vile procuress held my right; and then he clasped me round the waist!

145 'Is the wench mad?' said I. 'Why, how now, confidence?' thinking still it had been Nan. But he kissed me with frightful vehemence; and then his voice broke upon me like a clap of thunder: 'Now, Pamela,' said he, 'is the time of reckoning come, that I have threatened!' I screamed out for help; but there was nobody to help me: and both my

John another servant
Mr Williams a clergyman

closet small side-room, where Mr B. once hid

articles formal proposal that Pamela be his mistress

170 hands were secured, as I said. Sure never poor soul was in such agonies as I. 'Wicked man!' said I; 'wicked abominable woman! Good Heaven, this *one* time! this *one* time, good Heaven, deliver me, or strike me dead this moment!' And then I screamed again and again.

175 'One word with you, Pamela!' said he. 'Hear me but one word! Hitherto you find I offer nothing to you.' 'Is this *nothing*,' said I, 'to be in bed here? To hold my hands between you?'

'Hear me, Pamela.' 'I will hear, if you will this moment leave the bed, and take this vile woman from me!'

180 Said she (O disgrace of womankind!) 'Don't stand dilly-dallying, sir. She cannot exclaim worse than she has done; and will be quieter when she knows the worst.'

'Silence!' said he to her. 'I must say one word to you, Pamela: it is this; you now see, that you are in my power! You cannot get from me, nor help yourself: yet have I not offered any thing amiss to you. But if you resolve not to comply with my proposals, I will not lose this opportunity. If you do, I will yet leave you. I abhor violence. Your complaisance, my dear girl, shall entitle you to all I offered you in my proposals.'

190 'O sir,' exclaimed I, 'leave me, do but leave me, and I will do any thing I ought to do.' 'Swear then to me,' said he, 'that you will accept my proposals!' And then (for this was all detestable grimace) he put his hand in my bosom.

195 With struggling, fright, terror, I quite fainted away, and did not come to myself soon; so that they both, from the cold sweats I was in, thought me dying. And I remember no more, than that, when, with great difficulty, they brought me to myself, she was sitting on one side of the bed, with her clothes on; and he on the other, in his gown and slippers.

200 When I saw them there, I sat up in my bed, nothing about my neck, without any regard to what appearance I must make: and he soothing me with an aspect of pity and concern, I put my hand to his mouth, and said, 'O tell me, yet tell me not, what I have suffered in this distress!' And I talked quite wild, and knew not what; for I was on the point of distraction.

205 He most solemnly, and with a bitter imprecation, vowed, that he had not offered the least indecency; that he was frightened at the terrible manner I was taken with the fit: that he would desist from his attempt; and begged but to see me easy and quiet, and he would leave me directly, and go to his own bed. 'O then,' said I, 'take with you this most wicked woman, this vile Mrs Jewkes, as an earnest that I may believe you!'

210 'And will you, sir,' said the wicked wretch, 'for a fit or two, give up such an opportunity as this? I thought you had known the sex better. She is now, you see, quite well again!'

215 This I heard; more she might say; but I fainted away once more, at these words, and at his clasping his arms about me again. And when I came a little to myself, I saw him sit there, and the maid Nan, holding a smelling-bottle to my nose, and no Mrs Jewkes.

220 He said, taking my hand, 'Now will I vow to you, my dear Pamela, that I will leave you the moment I see you better, and pacified. Here's Nan knows, and will tell you, my concern for you. I vow to Heaven, that I have not offered any indecency to you. And since I found Mrs Jewkes so offensive to you, I have sent her to the maid's bed. The maid only shall stay with you tonight; and but promise me, that you will compose yourself, and I will leave you.' 'But,' said I, 'will not Nan also hold my hand? And will not she let you come in again?' He swore that he would not return that night. 'Nan,' said he, 'do you go to bed to the dear creature, and say all you can to comfort her: and now, Pamela, give me but your hand, and say you forgive me, and I will leave you to your repose.'

230 I held out my trembling hand, which he vouchsafed to kiss; and again demanding my forgiveness, 'God forgive you, sir,' said I, 'as you will be just to what you promise!' And he withdrew, with a countenance of remorse, as I hoped; and Nan shut the doors, and, at my request, brought the keys to bed.

235 This, O my dear parents! was a most dreadful trial. I tremble still to think of it. I hope, as he assures me, he was not guilty of indecency; but have reason to be thankful that I was disabled in my intellects. Since it is but too probable, that all my resistance, and all my strength, otherwise would not have availed me.

240 I was so weak all day on Monday, that I could not get out of bed. My master showed great tenderness for me; and I hope he is really sorry, and that this will be his last attempt; but he does not say so neither.

245 He came in the morning, as soon as he heard the door open: and I began to be fearful. He stopped short of the bed, and said, 'Rather than give you apprehensions, I will come no further.' 'Your honour, sir,' said I, 'and your mercy, is all I have to beg.'

250 He sat down on the side of the bed, and asked kindly, 'How I did? He bid me be composed; and said, I still looked a little wildly. 'Pray, sir,' said I, 'let me not see this infamous Mrs Jewkes: I cannot bear her in my sight.' 'She shan't come near you all this day, if you will promise to compose yourself.' 'Then, sir, I will try.' He pressed my hand very tenderly, and went out.

255 What a change does this show! May it be lasting! But, alas! he seems only to have altered his method of proceeding; and retains, I doubt, his wicked purpose!

On Tuesday about ten o'clock, when he heard I was up, he sent for

me down into the parlour. As soon as he saw me, he said, 'Come nearer to me, Pamela.' I did, and he took my hand, and said, 'You begin to look well again: I am glad of it. You little rogue,' was his free word, 'how did you frighten me on Sunday night?' 'Sir,' said I, 'pray name not that night'; my eyes overflowing at the remembrance: and I turned my head aside.

'Place some little confidence in me,' said he. 'I know what those charming eyes mean, and you shall not need to explain yourself. I do assure you, that the moment you fainted away, I quitted the bed, and Mrs Jewkes did so too. I put on my gown, and she fetched her smelling-bottle, and we both did all we could to restore you; and my passion for you was all swallowed up in the concern I had for your recovery; for I thought I never saw a fit so strong and violent in my life; and feared we should not bring you to yourself again. My apprehensions for you, might possibly be owing to my folly, and my unacquaintedness with what your sex *can* show when they are in earnest. But this I repeat to you, that your mind may be entirely comforted: all that I offered to you was before you fainted away. You yourself are sensible, that that was rather what might excite your fears, than deserve your censure. You have nothing, therefore, to make yourself uneasy at, or to reproach me with on the occasion you take so much at heart.'

'What you refer to, sir,' said I, 'was very bad: and it was too plain, you had the worst designs.' 'When I tell you the truth in one instance,' replied he, 'you may believe me in the other. I know not, I declare, beyond that lovely bosom, that you are a woman; but that I *did* intend what you call *the worst*, is most certain: and though I would not too much alarm you now, I could curse my weakness and my folly, which makes me own, that I cannot live without you. But, if I am master of myself, and my own resolution, I will not attempt to compel you to any thing.' 'Sir,' said I, 'you may easily keep your resolution, if you will send me out of your way, to my parents; and that is all I beg.'

'Tis a folly to talk of it,' said he. 'You must not, shall not go. And if I could be assured you would not attempt it, your stay here should be made agreeable to you.' 'But to what end, sir, am I to stay?' said I: 'you yourself seem not sure you can keep your own present good resolutions; and what would you think of me, were I to stay to my danger, if I *could* get away in safety? And what will the world —'

'The world, pretty simpleton!' interrupted he: 'what has the world to do between you and me? But I now sent for you for two reasons; the first is, to engage you to promise me for a fortnight to come, that you will not offer to go away without my consent; and this I expect for *your own* sake, that I may give you more liberty. The second, that you will see Mrs Jewkes, and forgive her. She is much concerned, and

thinks, that, as all her fault was her obedience to me, it would be very cruel to sacrifice her, as she calls it, to your resentment.'

'As to the first, sir,' said I, 'it is a hard injunction: and as to the second, considering Mrs Jewkes's vile unwomanly wickedness, and her endeavours to instigate you to ruin me, when you, from your returning goodness, seemed to have some compassion for me, it is still harder. But to shew my compliance in all I *can* comply with' (for you know, my dear parents, I might as well make a merit of complying, when my refusal would stand me in no stead) 'I will consent to both.'

'That's my good girl!' said he, and kissed me. 'This is quite prudent, and shows me, that you don't take insolent advantage of my passion for you; and will, perhaps, stand you in more stead than you are aware of.'

He then rung the bell, and said, 'Call down Mrs Jewkes.' She came down, and he took my hand, and put it into hers; and said, 'Mrs Jewkes, I am obliged to you for your diligence and fidelity; but Pamela must be allowed to think *she* is not; because the service I employed you in was not so agreeable to her, as I could have wished she would have thought it; and you were not to favour her, but obey me. But yet I assure you, at the very first word, she has *once* obliged me, by consenting to be reconciled to you; and if she gives me no great cause, I shall not, perhaps, put you on such disagreeable service again. Now, therefore, be you once more bedfellows and board-fellows, as I may say, for some days longer; and see that Pamela sends no letters nor messages out of the house, nor keeps a correspondence unknown to me, especially with that Williams; and, as for the rest, show the dear girl all the respect that is due to one I must love, and who yet, I hope, will deserve my love; and let her be under no unnecessary restraints. But your watchful care is not, however, to cease: and remember, that you are not to disoblige *me*, to oblige *her*; and that I will not, cannot, yet part with her.'

Mrs Jewkes looked very sullen, and as if she would be glad still to do me a good turn, if it lay in her power.

I took courage then to drop a word or two for poor Mr Williams; but he was angry, and said, he could not endure to hear his name, in my mouth.

I begged for leave to send a letter to you, my dear father. So I should, he said, if he might read it first. But this did not answer my design; and yet I would have sent you such a letter as he might have seen, if I had been sure my danger was over. But that I cannot; for he now seems to be taking another method: a method which I am still more apprehensive of, than I was of his more open and haughty behaviour; because he may now perhaps resolve to watch an opportunity, and join force with it, when I least think of my danger: for now he seems all kindness. He

345 talks of love without reserve; and makes nothing of allowing himself the liberty of kissing me, which he calls innocent; but which I do not like; since for a master to take such freedoms with a servant, has meaning too much in it, not to alarm.

350 Just this moment I have a confirmation of what I thought of his designs in his change of behaviour to me; for I overheard him say to the wicked woman, who very likely (for I heard not what she said) had been instigating him again, 'I have begun wrong. Terror does but add to her frost. But she is a charming girl; and may be thawed by kindness. I should have sought to melt her by love.'

355 What an abominable man is this! Yet his mother so good a woman! He says I must stay a fortnight. What a dangerous fortnight may this be to your girl! But I trust that God will enable me (as is my constant prayer) to be proof against his vileness . . .

1740

Philip Dormer Stanhope, Fourth Earl of Chesterfield 1694–1773

Chesterfield, a significant statesman and a friend of Scriblerian writers, is now best remembered as the recipient of Johnson's letter of defiance (p. 346), and for his letters to his natural son (publ. 1774; other letters to a godson publ. 1890). The letters were private advice to an evidently diffident and stupid boy (b. 1732) on how to behave as a gentleman; the degree of calculation and restraint required makes them a fascinating social document. Despite wide respect, Johnson said that they 'teach the morals of a whore and the manners of a dancing-master'. At any rate, they are the elegant product of a worldly mind.

From LETTERS TO HIS NATURAL SON [Polite Behaviour]

Bath, March 9, 1748.

Dear Boy,

I must, from time to time, remind you of what I have often recommended to you, and of what you cannot attend to too much; *sacrifice to the Graces*. The different effects of the same things, said or done, when accompanied or abandoned by them, is almost inconceivable. They prepare the way to the heart; and the heart has such an influence over the understanding, that it is worth while to engage it in our interest. It is the whole of women, who are guided by nothing else: and it has so much to say, even with men, and the ablest men too, that it commonly triumphs in every struggle with the understanding. Monsieur de Rochefoucault, in his *Maxims*,[†] says, that *l'esprit est souvent la dupe du cœur* [the heart often dupes the mind]. If he had said, instead of *souvent*, *presque toujours* [almost always], I fear he would have been nearer the truth. This being the case, aim at the heart.

15 Intrinsic merit alone will not do; it will gain you the general esteem of

Maxims (1665) a work also admired by Swift

all; but not the particular affection, that is, the heart of any. To engage the affection of any particular person, you must, over and above your general merit, have some particular merit to that person, by services done or offered; by expressions of regard and esteem; by complaisance, attentions, etc., for him: and the graceful manner of doing all these things opens the way to the heart, and facilitates, or rather ensures, their effects.

From your own observation, reflect what a disagreeable impression an awkward address, a slovenly figure, an ungraceful manner of speaking whether stuttering, muttering, monotony, or drawing, an unattentive behaviour, etc., make upon you, at first sight, in a stranger, and how they prejudice you against him, though, for aught you know, he may have great intrinsic sense and merit. And reflect, on the other hand, how much the opposites of all these things prepossess you, at first sight, in favour of those who enjoy them. You wish to find all good qualities in them, and are in some degree disappointed if you do not. A thousand little things, not separately to be defined, conspire to form these Graces, this *je ne sais quoi* [something], that always pleases. A pretty person, genteel motions, a proper degree of dress, an harmonious voice, something open and cheerful in the countenance, but without laughing; a distinct and properly varied manner of speaking: all these things, and many others, are necessary ingredients in the composition of the pleasing *je ne sais quoi*, which everybody feels, though nobody can describe. Observe carefully, then, what displeases or pleases you in others, and be persuaded, that, in general, the same thing will please or displease them in you.

Having mentioned laughing, I must particularly warn you against it: and I could heartily wish that you may often be seen to smile, but never heard to laugh while you live. Frequent and loud laughter is the characteristic of folly and ill manners: it is the manner in which the mob express their silly joy at silly things; and they call it being merry. In my mind there is nothing so illiberal, and so ill-bred, as audible laughter. True wit, or sense, never yet made anybody laugh; they are above it: they please the mind, and give a cheerfulness to the countenance. But it is low buffoonery, or silly accidents, that always excite laughter; and that is what people of sense and breeding should show themselves above. A man's going to sit down, in the supposition that he had a chair behind him, and falling down upon his breech for want of one, sets a whole company a laughing, when all the wit in the world would not do it; a plain proof, in my mind, how low and unbecoming a thing laughter is. Not to mention the disagreeable noise that it makes, and the shocking distortion of the face that it occasions. Laughter is easily restrained by a very little reflection; but, as it is generally connected with the idea of gaiety, people do not enough attend to its

absurdity. I am neither of a melancholy, nor a cynical disposition; and am as willing, and as apt, to be pleased as anybody; but I am sure that, since I have had the full use of my reason, nobody has ever heard me laugh. Many people, at first from awkwardness and *mauvaise honte* [bashfulness], have got a very disagreeable and silly trick of laughing whenever they speak: and I know a man of very good parts, Mr Waller, who cannot say the commonest thing without laughing; which makes those who do not know him take him at first for a natural fool. . . .

[How to Please People]

Sept. 5, 1748.

Berlin will be entirely a new scene to you, and I look upon it in a manner as your first step into the great world: take care that step be not a false one, and that you do not stumble at the threshold. You will there be in more company than you have yet been; manners and attentions will therefore be more necessary. Pleasing in company is the only way of being pleased in it yourself. Sense and knowledge are the first and necessary foundations for pleasing in company, but they will by no means do alone, and they will never be perfectly welcome if they are not accompanied with manners and attentions. You will best acquire these by frequenting the companies of people of fashion; but then you must resolve to acquire them in those companies by proper care and observation; for I have known people who, though they have frequented good company all their lifetime, have done it in so inattentive and unobserving a manner as to be never the better for it, and to remain as disagreeable, as awkward, and as vulgar, as if they had never seen any person of fashion. When you go into good company (by good company is meant the people of the first fashion of the place) observe carefully their turn, their manners, their address, and conform your own to them.

But this is not all, neither; go deeper still; observe their characters, and pry, as far as you can, into both their hearts and their heads. Seek for their particular merit, their predominant passion, or their prevailing weakness; and you will then know what to bait your hook with to catch them. Man is a composition of so many and such various ingredients, that it requires both time and care to analyse him; for, though we have all the same ingredients in our general composition, as reason, will, passion, and appetites; yet the different proportions and combinations of them in each individual, produce that infinite variety of characters which in some particular or other distinguishes every individual from another. Reason ought to direct the whole, but seldom does. And he who addresses himself singly to another man's reason, without endeavouring to engage his heart in his interest also, is no more

likely to succeed, than a man who should apply only to a King's nominal minister and neglect his favourite.

35 La Rochefoucault is I know blamed, but I think without reason, for deriving all our actions from the source of self-love. For my own part, I see a great deal of truth and no harm at all in that opinion. It is certain that we seek our own happiness in everything we do; and it is as certain that we can only find it in doing well, and in conforming all our actions to the rule of right reason, which is the great law of nature. It is only a mistaken self-love that is a blameable motive, when we take the immediate and indiscriminate gratification of a passion or appetite for real happiness. But am I blameable if I do a good action, upon account of the happiness which that honest consciousness will give me? Surely not. On the contrary, that pleasing consciousness is a proof of my virtue. The reflection which is the most censured in Monsieur de la 45 Rochefoucault's book, as a very ill-natured one, is this: *On trouve dans le malheur de son meilleur ami, quelque chose qui ne déplaît pas* [there is something not displeasing in our best friend's ill]. And why not? Why may I not feel a very tender and real concern for the misfortune of my friend, and yet at the same time feel a pleasing consciousness of having discharged my duty to him, by comforting and assisting him to the utmost of my power in that misfortune? Give me but virtuous actions, and I will not quibble and chicanery about the motives. And I will give anybody their choice of these two truths, which amount to the same thing: He who loves himself best is the honestest man; or, The honestest 55 man loves himself best. . . .

As women are a considerable, or at least a pretty numerous part of company; and as their suffrages go a great way towards establishing a man's character in the fashionable part of the world (which is of great importance to the fortune and figure he proposes to make in it), it is necessary to please them. I will therefore, upon this subject, let you into certain *arcana* [secrets], that will be very useful for you to know, but which you must, with the utmost care, conceal, and never seem to know. Women, then, are only children of a larger growth; they have 60 an entertaining tattle and sometimes wit; but for solid, reasoning good-sense, I never in my life knew one that had it, or who reasoned or acted consequentially for four-and-twenty hours together. Some little passion or humour always breaks in upon their best resolutions. Their beauty neglected or controverted, their age increased, or their supposed 70 understandings depreciated, instantly kindles their little passions, and overturns any system of consequential conduct, that in their most reasonable moments they might have been capable of forming. A man of sense only trifles with them, plays with them, humours and flatters them, as he does with a sprightly, forward child; but he neither consults them about, nor trusts them with, serious matters; though he often 75

makes them believe that he does both; which is the thing in the world that they are proud of; for they love mightily to be dabbling in business (which by the way, they always spoil); and being justly distrustful, that men in general look upon them in a trifling light, they almost adore that man, who talks more seriously to them, and who seems to consult and trust them; I say, who seems, for weak men really do, but wise ones only seem to do it. No flattery is either too high or too low for them. They will greedily swallow the highest, and gratefully accept of the lowest; and you may safely flatter any woman, from her understanding down to the exquisite taste of her fan. Women who are either indisputably beautiful, or indisputably ugly, are best flattered upon the score of their understandings; but those who are in a state of mediocrity are best flattered upon their beauty, or at least their graces; for every woman who is not absolutely ugly, thinks herself handsome; but, not hearing often that she is so, is the more grateful and the more obliged to the few who tell her so; whereas a decided and conscious beauty looks upon every tribute paid to her beauty, only as her due; but wants to shine, and to be considered on the side of her understanding; and a woman who is ugly enough to know that she is so, knows that she has nothing left for it but her understanding, which is consequently (and 95 probably in more senses than one) her weak side.

But these are secrets which you must keep inviolably, if you would not, like Orpheus,[†] be torn to pieces by the whole sex; on the contrary, a man who thinks of living in the great world, must be gallant, polite, and attentive to please the women. They have, from the weakness of men, more or less influence in all Courts; they absolutely stamp every man's character in the *beau monde* [fashionable world], and make it either current, or cry it down, and stop it in payments. It is, therefore, absolutely necessary to manage, please, and flatter them; and never to discover[†] the least marks of contempt, which is what they never forgive; but in this they are not singular, for it is the same with men; who will much sooner forgive an injustice than an insult. Every man is not ambitious, or covetous, or passionate; but every man has pride enough in his composition to feel and resent the least slight and contempt. 110 Remember, therefore, most carefully to conceal your contempt, however just, wherever you would not make an implacable enemy. Men are much more unwilling to have their weaknesses and their imperfections known, than their crimes; and, if you hint to a man that you think him silly, ignorant, or even ill-bred or awkward, he will hate you more, and longer, than if you tell him plainly that you think him a rogue. Never yield to that temptation, which to most young men is very strong, of

Orpheus legendary Greek hero destroyed by frenzied women discover reveal

120 exposing other people's weaknesses and infirmities, for the sake either of diverting the company, or of showing your own superiority. You may get the laugh on your side by it, for the present; but you will make enemies by it for ever; and even those who laugh with you then will, upon reflection, fear, and consequently hate you; besides that, it is ill-natured, and a good heart desires rather to conceal than expose other people's weaknesses or misfortunes. If you have wit, use it to please, and not to hurt: you may shine like the sun in the temperate zones, without scorching. Here it is wished for: under the line it is dreaded.

125 These are some of the hints which my long experience in the great world enables me to give you; and which, if you attend to them, may prove useful to you in your journey through it. I wish it may be a prosperous one; at least, I am sure that it must be your own fault if it is not. . . .

[Social Accomplishments]

London, January 18, 1750.

My Dear Friend,

I consider the solid part of your little edifice as so near being finished and completed, that my only remaining care is about the embellishments; and that must now be your principal care too. Adorn yourself with all those graces and accomplishments, which, without solidity, are frivolous; but without which, solidity is, to a great degree, useless. Take one man, with a very moderate degree of knowledge, but with a pleasing figure, a prepossessing address, graceful in all that he says and does, polite, *liant* [winning], and, in short, adorned with all the lesser talents; and take another man, with sound sense and profound knowledge, but without the above-mentioned advantages; the former will not only get the better of the latter, in every pursuit of every kind, but in truth there will be no sort of competition between them. But can every man acquire these advantages? I say Yes, if he please; supposing he is in a situation, and in circumstances, to frequent good company. Attention, observation, and imitation, will most infallibly do it.

When you see a man, whose first *abond* [manner] strikes you, prepossesses you in his favour, and makes you entertain a good opinion of him, you do not know why: analyse that *abond*, and examine, within yourself, the several parts that compose it; and you will generally find it to be the result, the happy assemblage, of modesty unembarrassed, respect without timidity, a genteel, but unaffected attitude of body and limbs, an open, cheerful, but unsmirking countenance, and a dress, by no means negligent, and yet not foppish. Copy him, then, not servilely, but as some of the greatest masters of painting have copied others;

insomuch, that their copies have been equal to the originals, both as to beauty and freedom. When you see a man, who is universally allowed to shine as an agreeable well-bred man, and a fine gentleman (as for example, the Duke de Nivernois), attend to him, watch him carefully; observe in what manner he addresses himself to his superiors, how he lives with his equals, and how he treats his inferiors. Mind his turn of conversation, in the several situations of morning visits, the table, and the evening amusements. Imitate, without mimicking him; and be his duplicate, but not his ape. You will find that he takes care never to say or do anything that can be construed into a slight, or a negligence; or that can, in any degree, mortify people's vanity and self-love; on the contrary, you will perceive that he makes people pleased with him, by making them first pleased with themselves: he shows respect, regard, esteem, and attention, where they are severally proper; he sows them with care, and he reaps them in plenty.

These amiable accomplishments are all to be acquired by use and imitation; for we are, in truth, more than half what we are, by imitation. The great point is, to choose good models, and to study them with care. People insensibly contract, not only the air, the manners, and the vices, of those with whom they commonly converse, but their virtues too, and even their way of thinking. This is so true, that I have known very plain understandings catch a certain degree of wit, by constantly conversing with those who had a great deal. Persist, therefore, in keeping the best company, and you will insensibly become like them; but if you add attention and observation, you will very soon be one of them. This inevitable contagion of company, shows you the necessity of keeping the best, and avoiding all other; for in every one, something will stick. You have hitherto, I confess, had very few opportunities of keeping polite company. Westminster school is, undoubtedly, the seat of illiberal manners and brutal behaviour. Leipzig, I suppose, is not the seat of refined and elegant manners. Venice, I believe, has done something; Rome, I hope, will do a great deal more; and Paris will, I dare say, do all that you want: always supposing, that you frequent the best companies, and in the intention of improving and forming yourself; for, without that intention, nothing will do.

Here subjoin a list of all those necessary, ornamental accomplishments (without which, no man living can either please or rise in the world) which hitherto I fear you want, and which only require your care and attention to possess.

To speak elegantly, whatever language you speak in; without which, nobody will hear you with pleasure, and, consequently, you will speak to very little purpose.

An agreeable and distinct elocution; without which nobody will hear you with patience; this everybody may acquire, who is not born with

70 some imperfection in the organs of speech. You are not; and therefore it is wholly in your power. You need take much less pains for it than Demosthenes did.

75 A distinguished politeness of manners and address; which common sense, observation, good company, and imitation, will infallibly give you, if you will accept of it.

A genteel carriage, and graceful motions, with the air of a man of fashion. A good dancing-master, with some care on your part, and some imitation of those who excel, will soon bring this about.

80 To be extremely clean in your person, and perfectly well dressed, according to the fashion, be that what it will. Your negligence of dress, while you were a schoolboy, was pardonable, but would not be so now.

Upon the whole, take it for granted, that, without these accomplishments, all you know, and all you can do, will avail you very little. Adieu!

1774

James Thomson

1700–48

Brought up in the Scottish borders, Thomson came to London at 25 and eventually became acquainted with the Scriblerus wits: his poetry represents a contemporary alternative to the urban, satiric strain. His four poems on the seasons appeared 1726–30, and the complete work was repeatedly revised to 1746, having great popularity. The blank verse, latinate diction and syntax owe much to Milton. The close study of nature is set in a framework of moral reflection and concern with the great author of the universe. Thomson also wrote dramas and, probably, 'Rule Britannia'. His last work, *The Castle of Indolence* (1748), is an allegory which returns to the stanza used by Spenser in *The Faerie Queene* (1590–6), whose archaic language it echoes.

THE SEASONS

From *Summer*

'Tis raging noon; and, vertical, the Sun
Darts on the head direct his forceful rays.

435 O'er heaven and earth, far as the ranging eye
Can sweep, a dazzling deluge reigns; and all
From pole to pole is undistinguished blaze.

In vain the sight dejected¹ to the ground
Stoops for relief; thence hot ascending streams

440 And keen reflection pain. Deep to the root
Of vegetation parched, the cleaving fields
And slippery lawn an arid hue disclose,

Blast fancy's blooms, and wither even the soul.
Echo no more returns the cheerful sound

445 O'er him the humid hay, with flowers perfumed;
Of sharpening scythe: the mower, sinking, heaps
O'er him the humid hay, with flowers perfumed;

And scarce a chirping grasshopper is heard
Through the dumb mead. Distressful nature pants.
The very streams look languid from afar,

dejected (Latin) cast down

Or, through th' unsheltered glade, impatient seem
To hurl into the covert of the grove.

All-conquering heat, oh, intermit thy wrath!
And on my throbbing temples potent thus
Beam not so fierce! Incessant still you flow,
And still another fervent flood succeeds,

Poured on the head profuse.[†] In vain I sigh,
And restless turn, and look around for night:
Night is far off; and hotter hours approach.

Thrice happy he, who on the sunless side
Of a romantic mountain, forest-crowned,
Beneath the whole collected shade reclines;

Or in the gelid* caverns, woodbine-wrought
And fresh bedewed with ever-spouting streams,
Sits coolly calm; while all the world without,
Unsatisfied and sick, tosses in noon.

Emblem instructive of the virtuous man,
Who keeps his tempered mind serene and pure,
And every passion aptly harmonized
Amid a jarring world with vice inflamed.

Welcome, ye shades! ye bowery thickets, hail!
Ye lofty pines! ye venerable oaks!
Ye ashes wild, resounding o'er the steep!
Delicious is your shelter to the soul

As to the hunted hart the sallying spring
Or stream full-flowing, that his swelling sides
Laves as he floats along the herbage brink.

Cool through the nerves your pleasing comfort glides;
The heart beats glad; the fresh-expanded eye
And ear resume their watch; the sinews knit;
And life shoots swift through all the lightened limbs.

Around th' adjoining brook, that curls along
The vocal grove, now fretting o'er a rock,
Now scarcely moving through a reedy pool,
Now starting to a sudden stream, and now
Gently diffused into a limpid plain,

A various group the herds and flocks compose,
Rural confusion! On the grassy bank
Some ruminating lie, while others stand
Half in the flood and, often bending, sip
The circling surface. In the middle droops
The strong laborious ox, of honest front,

profuse (Latin) poured forth

Which incomposed* he shakes; and from his sides
The troublous insects lashes with his tail,

Returning still. Amid his subjects safe
Slumbers the monarch-swain, his careless arm
Thrown round his head on downy moss sustained;
Here laid his scrip* with wholesome viands filled,
There, listening every noise, his watchful dog.

Light fly his slumbers, if perchance a flight
Of angry gad-flies fasten on the herd,
That startling scatters from the shallow brook
In search of lavish stream. Tossing the foam,
They scorn the keeper's voice, and scour the plain
Through all the bright severity of noon;

While from their labouring breasts a hollow moan
Proceeding runs low-bellowing round the hills.
Oft in this season too, the horse, provoked,
While his big sinews full of spirits swell,

Trembling with vigour, in the heat of blood
Springs the high fence, and o'er the field effused,[†]
Darts on the gloomy flood with steadfast eye
And heart estranged to fear: his nervous* chest,

Luxuriant and erect, the seat of strength,
Bears down th' opposing stream; quenchless his thirst,
He takes the river at redoubled draughts,
And with wide nostrils, snorting, skims the wave.
Still let me pierce into the midnight depth

Of yonder grove, of wildest largest growth,
That, forming high in air a woodland choir,
Nods o'er the mount beneath. At every step,
Solemn and slow the shadows blacker fall,
And all is awful listening gloom around.

These are the haunts of meditation, these
The scenes where ancient bards th' inspiring breath
Ecstatic felt, and, from this world retired,
Conversed with angels and immortal forms,
On gracious errands bent — to save the fall
Of virtue struggling on the brink of vice;
In waking whispers and repeated dreams
To hint pure thought, and warn the favoured soul,

For future trials fated, to prepare;
To prompt the poet, who devoted gives
His muse to better themes; to soothe the pangs

effused rushing free

disturbed

bag

strong

cold

Of dying worth, and from the patriot's breast
 (Backward to mingle in detested war,
 But foremost when engaged) to turn the death;
 And numberless such offices of love,
 Daily and nightly, zealous to perform. . . .

From *Winter*[†]

When from the pallid sky the Sun descends,
 With many a spot, that o'er his glaring orb
 Uncertain wanders, stained; red fiery streaks
 Begin to flush around. The reeling clouds
 Stagger with dizzy poise, as doubting yet
 Which master to obey; while, rising slow,
 Blank in the leaden-coloured east, the moon
 Wears a wan circle round her blunted horns.
 Seen through the turbid, fluctuating air,
 The stars obtuse[†] emit a shivering ray;
 Or frequent seem to shoot athwart the gloom,
 And long behind them trail the whitening blaze.
 Snatched in short eddies, plays the withered leaf;
 And on the flood the dancing feather floats.
 With broadened nostrils to the sky upturned,
 The conscious heifer snuffs the stormy gale.
 Even, as the matron, at her nightly task,
 With pensive labour draws the flaxen thread,
 The wasted taper and the crackling flame
 Foretell the blast. But chief the plummy race,
 The tenants of the sky, its changes speak.
 Retiring from the downs, where all day long
 They picked their scanty fare, a blackening train
 Of clamorous rooks thick-urge their weary flight,
 And seek the closing shelter of the grove.
 Assiduous, in his bower, the wailing owl
 Plies his sad song. The cormorant on high
 Plies from the deep, and screams along the land.
 Loud shrieks the soaring hern; and with wild wing
 The circling sea-fowl cleave the flaky clouds.
 Ocean, unequal pressed, with broken tide
 And blind commotion heaves; while from the shore,
 Eat[†] into caverns by the restless wave,

Much of the detail is from Virgil, *Georgics* 1 Eat eaten, worn away
 obtuse not seen sharply

And forest-rustling mountain comes a voice
 That, solemn-sounding, bids the world prepare.
 Then issues forth the storm with sudden burst,
 And hurls the whole precipitated air
 155 Down in a torrent. On the passive main
 Descends th' ethereal force, and with strong gust
 Turns from its bottom the discoloured deep.
 Through the black night that sits immense around,
 Lashed into foam, the fierce-conflicting brine
 160 Seems o'er a thousand raging waves to burn.
 Meantime the mountain-billows, to the clouds
 In dreadful tumult swelled, surge above surge,
 Burst into chaos with tremendous roar,
 And anchored navies from their stations drive
 165 Wild as the winds, across the howling waste
 Of mighty waters: now th' inflated wave
 Straining they scale, and now impetuous shoot
 Into the secret chambers of the deep,
 The wintry Baltic thundering o'er their head.
 Emerging thence again, before the breath
 170 Of full-exerted heaven they wing their course,
 And dart on distant coasts – if some sharp rock
 Or shoal insidious break not their career,
 And in loose fragments fling them floating round.
 175 Nor less at land the loosened tempest reigns.
 The mountain thunders, and its sturdy sons[†]
 Stoop to the bottom of the rocks they shade.
 Lone on the midnight steep, and all aghast,
 The dark wayfaring stranger breathless toils,
 180 And often falling, climbs against the blast.
 Low waves the rooted forest, vexed, and sheds
 What of its tarnished honours[†] yet remain –
 Dashed down and scattered, by the tearing wind's
 Assiduous fury, its gigantic limbs.
 185 Thus struggling through the dissipated grove,
 The whirling tempest raves along the plain;
 And, on the cottage thatched or lordly roof
 Keen-fastening, shakes them to the solid base.
 Sleep frightened flies; and round the rocking dome,[†]
 190 For entrance eager, howls the savage blast.
 Then too, they say, through all the burdened air

sturdy sons strong trees dome (Latin) house
 tarnished honours ruined foliage

Long groans are heard, shrill sounds, and distant sighs,
That, uttered by the demon of the night,
Warn the devoted* wretch of woe and death.

doomed

Huge uproar lords it wide. The clouds, commixed
With stars swift-gliding, sweep along the sky.

All Nature reels: till Nature's King, who oft
Amid tempestuous darkness dwells alone,
And on the wings† of the careering wind

Walks dreadfully serene, commands a calm;
Then straight air, sea, and earth are hushed at once.

As yet 'tis midnight deep. The weary clouds,
Slow-meeting, mingle into solid gloom.

Now, while the drowsy world lies lost in sleep,
Let me associate with the serious Night,

And Contemplation, her sedate compeer;
Let me shake off th' intrusive cares of day,
And lay the meddling senses all aside.

Where now, ye lying vanities of life!

Ye ever-tempting, ever-cheating train!

Where are you now? and what is your amount?
Vexation, disappointment, and remorse.

Sad, sickening thought! and yet deluded man,
A scene of crude disjointed visions past,

And broken slumbers, rises still resolved,

With new-flushed hopes, to run the giddy round.

Father of light and life! thou Good Supreme!

O teach me what is good! teach me Thyself!

Save me from folly, vanity, and vice,

From every low pursuit; and feed my soul

With knowledge, conscious peace, and virtue pure –

Sacred, substantial, never-fading bliss! . . .

1726–46

From THE CASTLE OF INDOLENCE [The Land of Drowsyhed]

CANTO I

The Castle hight of Indolence,
And its false luxury;
Where for a little time, alas!
We lived right jollily*

called

I

O mortal man, who livest here by toil,

Do not complain of this thy hard estate;

That like an emmet* thou must ever moil*
Is a sad sentence† of an ancient date:

ant toil

And, certes* there is for it reason great;

certainly

For though sometimes it makes thee weep and wail,
And curse thy stars, and early drudge and late,

Withouten that would come an heavier bale,*
Loose life, unruly passions, and diseases pale.

trouble

II

In lowly dale, fast by a river's side,

With woody hill o'er hill encompassed round,

A most enchanting wizard did abide,
Than whom a fiend more fell is nowhere found.

It was, I ween, a lovely spot of ground;

And there a season atween June and May,
Half prankt with spring, with summer half imbrowned,

A listless climate made, where, sooth to say,
No living wight could work, ne carèd even for play.

III

Was nought around but images of rest:

Sleep-soothing groves, and quiet lawns between;

And flowery beds that slumbrous influence kest,*
From poppies breathed; and beds of pleasant green,

cast

Where never yet was creeping creature seen.
Meantime unnumbered glittering streamlets played,

And hurled everywhere their waters sheen,*
That, as they bickered through the sunny glade,

bright

Though restless still themselves, a lulling murmur made.

30 Joined to the prattle of the purling rills,
 Were heard the lowing herds along the vale,
 And flocks loud-bleating from the distant hills,
 And vacant shepherds piping in the dale:
 And now and then sweet Philomel* would wail,
 Or stock-doves plain amid the forest deep,
 That drowsy rustled to the sighing gale;
 35 And still a coil the grasshopper did keep:
 Yet all these sounds yblent* inclined all to sleep.

the nightingale

blended

IV
 Full in the passage of the vale, above,
 A sable, silent, solemn forest stood:
 Where nought but shadowy forms were seen to move,
 As Idless* fancied in her dreaming mood.
 40 And up the hills, on either side, a wood
 Of blackening pines, ay waving to and fro,
 Sent forth a sleepy horror through the blood;
 And where this valley winded out, below,
 45 The murmuring main was heard, and scarcely heard, to flow.

Idleness

VI
 A pleasing land of drowsyhd it was:
 Of dreams that wave before the half-shut eye;
 And of gay castles in the clouds that pass,
 For ever flushing round a summer sky:
 50 There eke the soft delights, that witchingly
 Instil a wanton sweetness through the breast,
 And the calm pleasures always hovered nigh;
 But whate'er smacked of noyance, or unrest,
 Was far far off expelled from this delicious nest.

VII

55 The landskip such, inspiring perfect ease;
 Where Indolence (for so the wizard hight)
 Close-hid his castle mid embowering trees,
 That half shut out the beams of Phoebus bright,
 And made a kind of checkered day and night.
 60 Meanwhile, unceasing at the massy gate,
 Beneath a spacious palm, the wicked wight
 Was placed; and, to his lute, of cruel fate
 And labour harsh complained, lamenting man's estate. . . .
 1748

Henry Fielding

1707–54

Fielding, the son of a general, was educated at Eton beside such future statesmen as the elder Pitt. He studied abroad at Leyden (1728–9) and returned to London to write many farces and dramatic satires (*The Life and Death of Tom Thumb the Great*, 1731; *The Historical Register* for 1736). The political censorship of the 1737 Licensing Act ended his theatre career, although he carried some of its techniques into his fiction. In *Shamela* (1741) he ridiculed the dubious morality and dramatic style of Richardson's novel; *Joseph Andrews* (1742), a more positive account of Pamela's 'brother', and *Tom Jones* (1749), offered his view of the novel as 'a comic epic poem in prose'; *Amelia* (1751) is more domestic and pathetic in treatment. Fielding had meanwhile taken to journalism, including the anti-Stuart *The Jacobite's Journal*, and continued to attack hypocrisy in his ironic celebration of the thief-taker, *Jonathan Wild the Great* (1743). Having read for the bar, he became Justice of the Peace for Westminster and then Middlesex (1749), and as Bow Street magistrate worked with his half-brother, Sir John, to stamp out street disorder and legal corruption, and promote the welfare of the poor. *The Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon* (1755) is a surprisingly lively account of an unsuccessful attempt to throw off his fatal illness.

From SHAMELA[†]

LETTER VI [True Confessions]

SHAMELA ANDREWS to HENRIETTA MARIA HONORA ANDREWS.

O Madam, I have strange things to tell you! As I was reading in that charming book about the Dealings,[†] in comes my master – to be sure he is a precious one. 'Pamela,' says he, 'what book is that? I warrant you Rochester's poems.'[†] 'No, forsooth,' says I, as pertly as I could;

Shamela Fielding ridicules the style and morality of the original by offering the 'true' account of Pamela

Dealings of God with the Methodist, George Whitefield
Rochester's poems that is, pornography

5 'why how now, Saucy Chops, Boldface,' says he – 'Mighty pretty words,' says I, pert again. – 'Yes (says he), you are a d – d, impudent, stinking, cursed, confounded jade, and I have a great mind to kick your a – ' You, kiss' – says I. 'Agad,' says he, 'and so I will;' with that he caught me in his arms, and kissed me till he made my face all over fire. Now this served purely, you know, to put upon the fool for anger. O! What precious fools men are! And so I flung from him in a mighty rage, and pretended as how I would go out at the door; but when I came to the end of the room, I stood still, and my master cried out, 'Hussy, Slut, Saucebox, Boldface, come hither' – 'Yes, to be sure,' says I; 'why don't you come,' says he; 'what should I come for?' says I; 'if you don't come to me, I'll come to you,' says he; 'I shan't come to you, I assure you,' says I. Upon which he run up, caught me in his arms, and flung me upon a chair, and began to offer to touch my under-petticoat. 'Sir,' says I, 'you had better not offer to be rude;' 'well,' says he, 'no more I won't then;' and away he went out of the room. I was so mad to be sure I could have cried.

Oh what a prodigious vexation it is to a woman to be made a fool of!

15 Mrs Jervis, who had been without, harkening, now came to me. She burst into a violent laugh the moment she came in. 'Well,' says she, as soon as she could speak, 'I have reason to bless myself that I am an old woman. Ah child! if you had known the jolly blades of my age, you would not have been left in the lurch in this manner.' 'Dear Mrs Jervis,' says I, 'don't laugh at one;' and to be sure I was a little angry with her. – 'Come,' says she, 'my dear honeysuckle, I have one game to play for you; he shall see you in bed; he shall, my little rosebud, he shall see those pretty, little, white, round, panting' – and offered to pull off my handkerchief.† – 'Fie, Mrs Jervis,' says I, 'you make me blush,' and upon my fackins,† I believe she did. She went on thus: 'I know the squire likes you, and notwithstanding the awkwardness of his proceeding, I am convinced hath some hot blood in his veins, which will not let him rest, till he hath communicated some of his warmth to thee, my little angel; I heard him last night at our door, trying if it was open; now tonight I will take care it shall be so; I warrant that he makes the second trial; which if he doth, he shall find us ready to receive him. I will at first-counterfeit sleep, and after a swoon; so that he will have you naked in his possession: and then if you are disappointed, a plague of all young squires, say I.' – 'And so, Mrs Jervis,' says I, 'you would have me yield myself to him, would you; you would have me be a second time a fool for nothing. Thank you for that, Mrs Jervis.' 'For nothing! marry forbid,' says she, 'you know he

handkerchief covering her breast

my fackins my faith

hath large sums of money, besides abundance of fine things; and do you think, when you have inflamed him, by giving his hand a liberty with that charming person; and that you know he may easily think he obtains against your will, he will not give anything to come at all?' – 'This will not do, Mrs Jervis,' answered I. 'I have heard my mamma say (and so you know, Madam, I have), that in her youth, fellows have often taken away in the morning what they gave over night. No, Mrs Jervis, nothing under a regular taking into keeping, a settled settlement,† for me, and all my heirs, all my whole lifetime, shall do the business – or else crosslegged is the word, faith, with Sham'; and then I snapt my fingers.

Thursday Night, Twelve o'Clock.

60 Mrs Jervis and I are just in bed, and the door unlocked; if my master should come – Odsbobs! I hear him just coming in at the door. You see I write in the present tense, as Parson Williams says. Well, he is in bed between us, we both shamming a sleep; he steals his hand into my bosom, which I, as if in my sleep, press close to me with mine, and then pretend to awake. – I no sooner see him, but I scream out to Mrs Jervis, she feigns likewise but just to come to herself; we both begin, she to becall, and I to bescratch very liberally. After having made a pretty free use of my fingers, without any great regard to the parts I attacked, I counterfeit a swoon. Mrs Jervis then cries out, 'O sir, what have you done? you have murdered poor Pamela: she is gone, she is gone.' –

O what a difficulty it is to keep one's countenance, when a violent laugh desires to burst forth!

75 The poor Booby, frightened out of his wits, jumped out of bed, and, in his shirt, sat down by my bed-side, pale and trembling, for the moon shone, and I kept my eyes wide open, and pretended to fix them in my head. Mrs Jervis applied lavender water, and hartshorn,† and this for a full half hour; when thinking I had carried it on long enough, and being likewise unable to continue the sport any longer, I began by degrees to come to myself.

80 The squire, who had sat all this while speechless, and was almost really in that condition which I feigned, the moment he saw me give symptoms of recovering my senses, fell down on his knees; and 'O Pamela,' cried he, 'can you forgive me, my injured maid? By heaven, I know not whether you are a man or a woman, unless by your swelling breasts. Will you promise to forgive me?' 'I forgive you! D – n you,' says I; 'and d – n you,' says he, 'if you come to that. I wish I had never seen your bold face, saucy sow' – and so went out of the room.

settlement formal transfer of property

hartshorn an ammonia restorative